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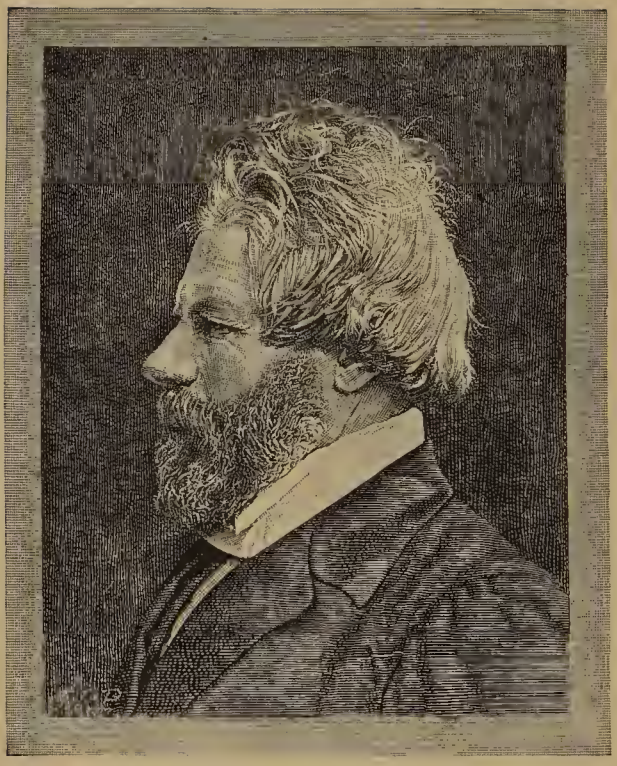

R. Chambers.

MEMOIR

OF

WILLIAM AND ROBERT CHAMBERS

BY

WILLIAM CHAMBERS, LL.D.

House at Peebles in which WILLIAM and ROBERT CHAMBERS were born

W. & R. CHAMBERS, LIMITED
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
1893

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NEWPORT, MON.

PREFATORY NOTE.

On the death of my brother, Dr Robert Chambers, numerous Biographic sketches of him appeared in Great Britain and the United States, all of them kind and complimentary, but in many cases imperfect or erroneous as regards certain leading details. It seemed to me that, while still spared life and opportunity, I might try to do justice to the memory of the deceased, by giving a correct history of his life and principal writings.

The attempt, however, involved a difficulty. Having been intimately associated with my brother, not only in early life, but in literary enterprises, it was scarcely possible to relate the story of one without frequent reference to the other. I have so far yielded to this necessity, as to offer some Autobiographic Reminiscences, in connection with the principal object in view. To this extent only is the Memoir that of two individuals.

The retrospect of some early events, which could not well be omitted, has not been unaccompanied with poignant recollections; but if a perusal of the narrative

serves in any degree to inspire youth with notions of self-reliance, along with a hopeful dependence on Providence when pressed by adverse circumstances, I shall be more than recompensed. W. CHAMBERS.

January, 1872.

SEVENTH EDITION.

FROM the favourable manner in which the MEMOIR has been received—the work having been carried through six large editions in less than twelve months—I have endeavoured to render it still more acceptable by a careful revision, and more especially by giving a few additional particulars concerning my brother's early life (including an account of his introduction to SIR WALTER SCOTT), gathered chiefly from a volume of memoranda recently found in his library. W. CHAMBERS.

January, 1873.

PREFACE TO THIS EDITION.

To this edition a Supplementary Chapter has been added, giving an account of the closing years of the writer of this *Memoir*, and concluding with some notes on the personal characteristics of the two brothers.

THE PUBLISHERS.

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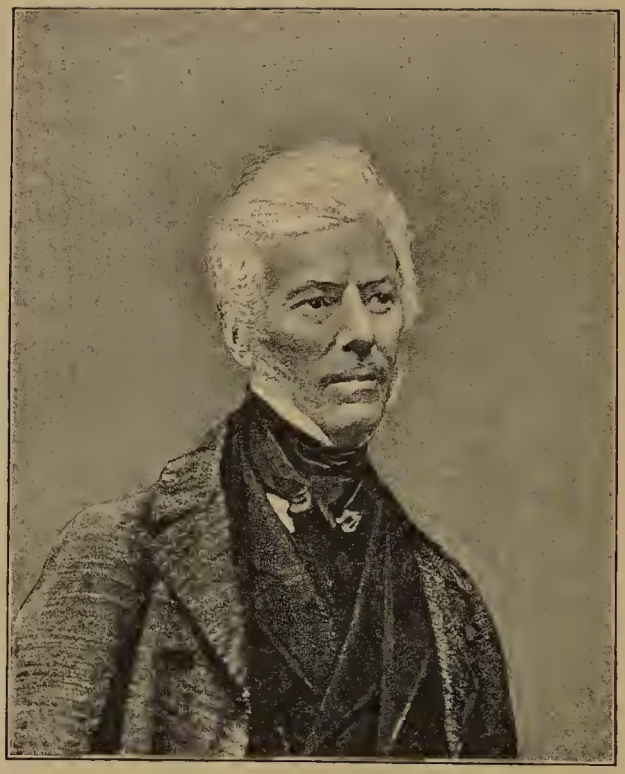


Yours truly

W. Chambers

PEEBLES.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY YEARS—1800 TO 1813.

MY brother and I were born and spent our early years in a small country town in the south of Scotland, situated amidst beautiful scenery, and had therefore the advantage of being acquainted from infancy with some of the noble works of nature, along with rural objects and circumstances. The place of our birth was Peebles, an ancient royal burgh on the upper part of the Tweed, where our ancestors had dwelt from time immemorial—the tradition among them being, that they were descended from a personage inscribed as 'William de la Chaumbre, Bailif é Burgois de Pebles,' in the list of those who signed bonds of allegiance to Edward I. at Berwick-on-Tweed, 1296. However that might be, I was born in this little old burgh, 16th April 1800; and Robert, coming next in order in the family, was born 10th July 1802.

For the place of birth and early associations almost every one has a peculiar affection; and among the Scotch, as is well known, this feeling is a marked national characteristic. It will not seem surprising, therefore, that through life Robert cherished kindly remembrances of the scenes of his infancy. A few years previous to his decease, he began notes of what may have been intended as a memoir of himself, but which were not carried farther than reminiscences from the dawn of intelligence to about his tenth year. Fragmentary as are these memoranda, they abound in the geniality of sentiment for which the writer was remarkable, and serve to illustrate the state of things in certain by-corners of Scotland sixty to seventy years since. The following portions may accordingly be acceptable, supplemented here and there by such particulars from my own remembrance as may help to complete the picture:

'In the early years of this century,' he proceeds, 'Peebles was little advanced from the condition in which it had mainly rested for several hundred years previously. It was eminently a quiet place—"As quiet as the grave or as Peebles," is a phrase used by Cockburn. It was said to be a finished town, for no new houses (exceptions to be of course allowed for) were ever built in it. Situated, however, among beautiful pastoral hills, with a singularly pure atmosphere, and with the pellucid Tweed running over its pebbly bed close beside the streets, the town was acknowledged to be, in the fond language of its inhabitants, a bonny place. An honest old burgher was enabled by some strange chance to visit Paris, and was eagerly questioned,

when he came back, as to the character of that capital of capitals; to which, it is said, he answered that "Paris, a'thing considered, was a wonderful place—but still, Peebles for pleesure!" and this has often been cited as a ludicrous example of rustic prejudice and narrowness of judgment. But, on a fair interpretation of the old gentleman's words, he was not quite so benighted as at first appears. The "pleesures" of Peebles were the beauties of the situation and the opportunities of healthful recreation it afforded, and these were certainly considerable.

'There was an old and a new town in Peebles—each of them a single street, or little more; and as even the new town had an antique look, it may be inferred that the old looked old indeed. It was indeed chiefly composed of thatched cottages, occupied by weavers and labouring people—a primitive race of homely aspect, in many instances eking out a scanty subsistence by having a cow on the town common, or cultivating a *rig* of potatoes in the fields close to the town. Rows of porridge *luggies* (small wooden vessels) were to be seen cooling on window-soles; a smell of peat smoke pervaded the place; the click of the shuttle was everywhere heard during the day; and in the evening, the gray old men came out in their Kilmarnock night-caps, and talked of Bonaparte, on the stone seats beside their doors. The platters used in these humble dwellings were all of wood, and the spoons of horn; knives and forks rather rare articles. The house was generally divided into two apartments by a couple of *box-beds*, placed end to end—a bad style of bed prevalent in cottages all over Scotland; they were so close as almost to stifle the inmates. Among these humble people, all

costumes, customs, and ways of living smacked of old times. You would see a venerable patriarch making his way to church on Sunday, with a long-backed, swing-tailed, light-blue coat of the style of George II., which was probably his marriage coat, and half a century old. His head-gear was a broad-brimmed blue bonnet. The old women came out on the same occasions in red scarfs, called cardinals, and white *mutches* (caps), bound by a black ribbon, with the gray hair folded back on the forehead. There was a great deal of drugget, and huckaback, and serge in that old world, and very little cotton. One almost might think he saw the humbler Scotch people of the seventeenth century before his eyes.

'In this old-town population, there survived two or three aged persons who professed an adherence to the Covenant and covenanted work of Reformation. One of these, designated Laird Baird, remains clearly daguerreotyped on my memory—a tall, bony, grim old man with blue *rig-and-fur* stockings rolled half way up his thighs, and a very umbrageous blue bonnet. His secular business consisted in thatching houses; his inner life was a constant brooding over the sins of a perjured and sinful nation, and the various turns of public affairs, in which he traced the punishments inflicted upon us by an outraged Deity, for our laying aside the Solemn League and Covenant. He came up to my mother one summer evening, as she was standing at her door with her first-born in her arms. "Ye're mickle pleased wi' that bairn, woman," said the laird gruffly. "If the French come, what will ye do wi' him? I trow ye'll be fleeing wi' him to the tap o' the Pentland Hills. But ye should rather pray that they *may* come. Ye should pray for judgments, woman—judgments on a sinfu' land.

Pray that the Lord may pour out the vials of His wrath upon us—it would be for our guid." And then he went on his way, leaving the pretty young mother heart-chilled by his terrible words. Having known something of old-town worthies of this kind, there was no novelty or surprise to me, a few years thereafter, when I read of Habakkuk Mucklewrath in Scott's *Old Mortality*.

'I had reason to know the old town in my earliest years, for our family then dwelt in it, though in a modern-slated house, which my father had had built for him by his father when about to be married. Our ancestors had been woollen manufacturers, substantial and respectable people, although living in a very plain style. My father growing up at the time when the cotton manufacture was introduced into Glasgow, had there studied it, and now conducted it on a pretty extensive scale at Peebles, having sometimes as many as a hundred looms in his employment. My earliest recollections bring before me a neat small mansion, fronting to the Eddleston Water; a tastefully furnished sitting-room, containing a concealed bed, one or two other little rooms, and a kitchen; a ground-floor full of looms, and a garret full of webs and weft. Games at marbles played with my elder brother on the figures of the parlour carpet, when recovering from an illness, come back upon me as among the pleasantest things I have experienced in life; or wandering into the work-shop below, it was a great entertainment to sit beside one of the weavers, and watch the movements of the heddles and treddles, and hear the songs and the gossip of the man. Weavers were topping operatives in those days, for they could realise two pounds a week,

sometimes even more, and many young men of good connections had joined the trade. My father, as agent for several manufacturers in Glasgow, realised a good income, which enabled him to live on an equality with the best families of the place.

'The farthest retrogression which any one can make in memory presents him a few obscure little matters starting out, as it were, from a back-ground of clouds and darkness. I can recall the little parlour, and a few of its decorations; an alabaster time-piece and three round alabaster-framed pictures to match—a present from my mother's brother, William Gibson, an officer in the army. The prominent living figure in the parlour was a young woman, of elegant shape, and delicately beautiful small features, having a white cambric handkerchief crossing on her bosom, with a lozenge-shaped gold brooch at the crossing, and another thin cambric handkerchief tied loosely round her neck; a being of lady-like grace and expression, and scarcely yet in her twenty-fourth year, though already the mother of three children, of whom I was the second. Next to her in distinctness as a figure of the memory was the husband of this lady, a neatly made, rather short man in the prime of life, with a handsome cast of face and an intelligent look; much given to reading and to music, being a tolerable performer on the German flute, fond of scientific conversation, kindly to children, and to everybody. There was but one servant—dear, kind, clever Jeanie Forbes, who used to charm my infant years with Scottish songs in wonderful abundance, and sang with a melodiousness that I have never heard surpassed. It was a delightful atmosphere for me, for of my father's music and of Jeanie's songs I never could tire.

'To a child, of course, all things are new, and the first occurrence of anything to his awakened senses never fails to make a deep impression. I think I yet remember the first time I observingly saw the swelling green hills around our little town. I am sure I could point to within ten yards of the spot where I saw the first gowan and the first buttercup; first heard the hum of the mountain bee; first looked with wonder into a hedge-sparrow's nest, with its curious treasure of blue eggs. A radius of half a mile would have described the entire world of my infancy: of that world every minute feature remains deeply stamped within me, and will while life and consciousness endure. There is a great deal of studious observation in a child. Casual, trivial, and thoughtless words spoken by his seniors in his presence go into him, to be afterwards estimated and judged of; so it is a great mistake to speak indecorously before children.

'At the time when I was coming upon the stage of the world, a number of old things were going out of it. The Rev. Dr Dalgliesh, the minister of the parish, still wore a cocked hat. He died in 1808; and I can just remember seeing him one Sunday, as he walked home from church, with that head-gear crowning his tall and dignified figure. There were still a few men with pig-tails whisking constantly over the collars of their coats. Spencers also still lingered in use.

'Boots, formerly used only in riding and travelling, were in vogue with men who desired to be smartly dressed. One could either have *top-boots*, that is, boots with a movable cincture of pale leather at top, or *tassel-boots*, by which was meant what were afterwards called Hessians, terminating in a wavy line under the knee,

with a tassel hanging out over the middle in front. A buckish weaver, called Willie Paterson, had got a pair of tassel-boots, on which he could fasten tops, and thus enjoy tops or tassels at his pleasure. People meeting him when he went to church would say: "Willie, I see this is top-day with you." Top-day or tassel-day for Willie Paterson's boots was a favourite joke. As an alternative for boots were gaiters to the knee, originally tight, but latterly lax, with vertical foldings.

"Lax in their gaiters, laxer in their gait,"

is a line in the *Rejected Addresses*, which strongly recalls to me the year 1812.

'The minister's chief elder in my early days was a cart and mill wright, a substantial citizen, related by marriage to our family, and with whose domestic life I was consequently well acquainted. Language fails me in expressing my sense of the goodness and worth of this old man, though, from the narrowness of his sphere of life, he had never learned to temper his piety with any great share of liberality. He afforded a perfect example of the religious practice of a former age, and would have been considered rather stern by the bulk of his contemporaries. Tammas, as he was familiarly called, had a large family of sons and daughters, whom he governed with relentless austerity. Any approach to gaiety of spirit was deemed highly improper, and dancing was positively sinful. This over-repressive policy—as in the case of Davie Deans—had no beneficial effect. Prevented from attending a respectably conducted dancing-school, his daughters stole out clandestinely in the evening to dances of not a very reputable character—a practice which led to some far from fortunate marriages.

'I could forgive everything in Tammas but the

sternness. In the hands of men of his kind, Christianity did not appear as a religion of love; it seemed almost wholly to consist in an imposition of irksome duties, and an abstinence from all natural and allowable enjoyments. A company of strolling players came to Peebles, and the manager went to Tammas, who was acting chief-magistrate in the absence of the provost, to negotiate for permission to use the town-hall as a theatre. When the suppliant approached, Tammas was hewing at a log out of doors, and stood with his axe suspended over his head while listening to the request.

"I 'll oppose it with all the means in my poo'er, sir!" exclaimed Tammas fiercely.

"Not with the hatchet, I hope, sir," responded the son of Thespis.

'The poor man had to set up his scenes in the upper room of a public-house, used as a mason lodge, and met with fair encouragement. Thither my brother and I were taken to see *Inkle and Yarico*. It was our first play.'

In his picturesque reminiscence of Tammas, my brother has failed to mention a somewhat curious fact. The old worthy underwent a considerable softening of character in the last few years of his life; and the conversion was all the more remarkable as being the result of reading a novel, *Thaddeus of Warsaw*, which an aged lady of kindly feeling persuaded him to peruse. The noble and pathetic sentiments of Miss Porter, in narrating the afflictions of her fictitious hero, touched the heart of the old Puritan, and did what no power on earth had been able to effect. What a pity that Tammas did not go to see *Inkle and Yarico!*

'The new town was a smarter place than the old; yet it contained many homely old thatched houses, and few of any elegance. The shops were for the most part confined and choky places, with what were called half-doors, a bell being generally rung by customers to summon the worthy trader. The shop of the candle-maker was provided with a bell-pull consisting of an old key dangling at the end of a cord, which was put in requisition to summon "Candle Nell," as the female in charge of the establishment was familiarly called. No attempt was made to keep up an appearance of business. All was quiet and sombre by day, and in the evenings a dim candle on the counter made the only difference. A favourite position of the shop-keeper was to lean on his arms over the half-door, gazing abroad into the vacant street, or chatting with a casual by-stander. I do not think there were more than three traders in the town who had any apprentice or hired assistant. If the husband was out for a forenoon's fishing in the Tweed, his wife was his sufficient lieutenant. It seems to me remarkable that, small as the concerns generally were, the family life of these people was of a somewhat refined character. The tone of the females was far from being vulgar. Accomplishments, such as are now so common, were unknown; but all had a good education in English, and their conversation was not deficient in intelligence.'

The mention of Candle Nell suggests that it was a common practice in the town to call people by their profession—as, for example, Baker Turnbull, Cooper Gibson—and such designations were extended to the wives, or it might be the sisters, of those personages. The wife of the cooper was styled Cooper Jean. A

government official charged with the duty of taxing the windows throughout the county, was sarcastically distinguished as Window Willie. A wildish lad, son of the cauper (maker of caups or wooden dishes), was never called anything but Cauper Jock. In some cases the prefixes were given from the locality. An ingenious blacksmith, who made a business of mending locks and guns, was known only as Vennel John. The county gave employment to a professional hunter of tods, or foxes, who, known generally as Tod-hunter Will, might, from his erratic character, have served as not a bad prototype of 'Tod Gabbie' in *Guy Mannering*. In the 'Tod Gabbie' and 'Goose Gibbie' of Scott, and the 'Souter Johnnie' of Burns, we see that the Peebles people of past times were not exceptional in their system of nomenclature.

Considering how little business was done, and also the easy way in which things were conducted, one would scarcely be prepared for the genteel interior of many of the dwellings, or for the tasteful dresses and courteous manners of the wives of the tradesmen. Though a trifle too obese, Candle Nell herself, when the shop was shut, could receive company in style, and addressed in her proper name, do the honours of her brother's household. A considerable number of persons kept a cow. The going forth of the town cows to their pasturage on a neighbouring hill, and their return, constituted leading and interesting events of the day. Early in the summer mornings, the inhabitants were roused by inharmonious sounds blown from an ox-horn by the town-herd, who leisurely perambulated the streets with a gray plaid twisted around his shoulders. Then came forth the cows, deliberately, one by one, from their respective

quarters, and took their way instinctively by the bridge across the Tweed, their keeper coming up behind, to urge forward the loiterers. Before taking the ascent to the hill, the cows, in picturesque groups, might have been seen standing within the margin of the Minister's Pool, a smooth part of the river, which reflected on its glistening surface the figures of the animals in various attitudes, along with the surrounding scenery; the whole —river, cows, and trees—forming a tableau such as would have been an appropriate study for Berghem or Wouvermans.

There was much pleasant intercourse among families at a small cost. Scarcely any gave ceremonious dinners. Invitations to tea at six o'clock were common. After tea there were songs, with perhaps a round of Scottish proverbs—a class of sayings which, from their agreeable tartness, found scope for exercise in ordinary transactions, and were more especially useful in snubbing children, and keeping them in remembrance of their duty.

The Peebles people were not behind their neighbours in the art of applying these maxims. As, for example, if a fastidious youth presumed to complain that his porridge was not altogether to his mind, he would have for reply: 'Lay your wame to your winnin''—that is, 'Suit your stomach to your earnings'—a staple observation in all such cases;—Or, if one of unsettled habits got into a scrape, such as 'slumping' in the ice, and coming home half-drowned, instead of being commiserated, he would be coolly reminded that 'An unhappy fish gets an unhappy bait;'—Or, if one hinted that he was hungry, and would not be the worse of something to eat, he would, if the application was inopportune, be favoured

with the advice in dietetics: 'You'll be the better o' findin' the grunds o' your stamick;'—Or, if he, on the other hand, asked for a drink of water shortly after dinner, he would be told that 'Mickle meat taks mickle weet;' by which wholesome rebuke he was instructed in the excellent virtue of moderation in eating;—Or, if one, when put to some kind of difficult task, said he wanted assistance, he would get the proverb pitched at him: 'Help yoursel', and your friends will like you the better;'—Or, if, on being sent an errand, he ventured to complain of the distance, he would be told: 'It will be lang before you wear to the knee-lids;'—Or, when a family of children quarrelled among themselves, and appealed to their mother for an edict of pacification, she would console them with the remark: 'You'll all agree better when ye gang in at different kirk doors.' A capital thing were these proverbs and sayings for stamping out what were called notions of 'uppishness' in children, or hopes of having everything their own way.

It must not, however, be inferred, from a proficiency in hurling these repressive maxims, that there was any actual deficiency in the affections. Along with a singular absence of demonstrativeness, there was often a spirit of true kindness. At that period, and till comparatively recent times, there was no demoralising poor-law, such as now exists, to steel the hearts of the people, and create paupers by wholesale. Those in easy circumstances helped, and gave some little personal attention to, their poorer neighbours; and I can remember that, on the occasion of a sudden death by a distressing accident in the family of a labouring man, the feelings of the whole community were munificently stirred up in compassion.

The country was still haunted by mendicants of various orders, including old decrepit women, who were carried about on hand-barrows from door to door, begging meal or halfpence. The town, also, was never without two or three natural idiots, generally harmless in character. The most interesting and amusing of these was Daft Jock Grey—or, to give him his proper title, 'Daft Jock Grey of Gilmanscleugh'—a wanderer through Roxburgh, Selkirk, and Peebles shires, who was known to Sir Walter Scott, and possessed qualities not unlike those assigned to the character of Davie Gellatley. Jock, a simple good-natured being, was a kind of genius, had a great command of songs, and composed a ballad, which, commencing with an allusion to his own infirmity, recited, in jingling rhymes, the names and qualities of a number of persons whose houses he frequented in his extensive rambles.

Hogmanay, the last day of the year, was the grand festival of all varieties of mendicants, daft folk, and children generally; for there was a universal distribution of oat-cakes, cheese, shortbread, and buns at the doors of the inhabitants. Among those who secured a respectable dole on such occasions was the town-piper, dressed in a red uniform and cocked hat, as befitted a civic official. Piper Ritchie, for such was his name, enjoyed the munificent salary of a pound a year from the corporation, along with a pair of shoes; and it was understood that, besides his dole at Hogmanay, he was entitled to receive at least a groat annually from all well-disposed householders. His emoluments were completed by certain small fees for playing at weddings. In escorting a marriage-party, he marched with becoming importance in front, playing with might and main a tune

called *Welcome hame, my Dearie.* It was part of his duty to march through the town every evening between nine and ten o'clock playing on his pipes, as a warning to the inhabitants to go to their beds. The poor piper died an aged man in July 1807. Robert, as recorded in his juvenile memoir, attended the piper's funeral, having had his first pair of trousers put on for the occasion.

On Hogmanay day, tradesmen called personally with their yearly accounts, of which they received payment, along with some appropriate refreshment. There was *first-footing* on New-year's morning. And Handsel Monday—the first Monday in the year—was marked by tossing a profusion of ballads and penny chap-books from windows among a crowd of clamorous youngsters. New-year was also signalised by various domestic festivities. The severity of manners of a hundred years earlier had worn off. There was unrebuked joviality at births and marriages, and even in a solemn way at deaths. In the house of the deceased, on the evening before the funeral, there was a Lyke-wake, consisting of a succession of services of refreshments, presided over by an undertaker, one of whose professional recommendations consisted in saying a fresh grace to each batch of mourners. Laird Grieve, an aged and facetious carpenter, carried off the chief business in coffin-making, in consequence of being able to say seven graces of considerable length without repetition. The consumption of whisky at these lugubrious entertainments was incredible, and sometimes encroached seriously on the means of families. After the funeral, there was an entertainment called the Dredgy, which was a degree more cheerful than the preceding potations.

Laird Grieve was the only representative of the fine arts in Peebles. In the town there was a house-painter, who could manage to paint the lettering of a sign-board, but was unable to execute anything pictorial. When a vintner, therefore, wished to embellish his sign with the alluring representation of a punch-bowl, a pint-stoup, or a few wine-glasses, flanked with two tobacco-pipes crosswise; or, if more ambitious, he desired to have the figure of a black bull *passant*, a red lion *rampant*, or some other heraldic object stuck up over his door, the laird was applied to, and gave uncommon satisfaction—like Dick Tinto, taking payment in kind, for when the work was finished, the painter had already eaten and drunk out its value. In his old days, when the poor laird was less able for these artistic performances, and means fell short, he depended mainly on turning peg-tops for the school-boys, besides which handicraft, he resorted to the ingenious artifice of composing doggerel verses, to repeat in making a round of calls among friends. Any incident occurring in the town would answer as a theme. On repeating his verses, some slight refection was produced—and *exit* the laird satisfied.

I may be excused offering this tribute of recollection to an aged man, who in his time meritoriously performed the useful part of town-carpenter, undertaker, artist, peg-top maker, and versifier; and who, from his facetious humours, kept the burgh in a degree of amusement for more than half a century.

Although the belief in witchcraft had died out generally, it was still entertained in a limited way by the less enlightened classes. I have a recollection of a poor old woman being reputed as a witch, and that it was

not safe to pass her cottage, without placing the thumb across the fourth finger, so as to form the figure of the cross. This species of exorcism I practised under instructions from boys older than myself. I likewise remember seeing salt thrown on the fire, as a guard against the evil-eye, when aged women, suspected of not being quite *canny*, happened to call at a neighbour's dwelling. The aged postman, as was confidently reported, never went on his rounds with the letters without a sprig of rowan-tree (mountain-ash) in his pocket, as a preservative against malevolent influences. There was no police. Offenders against the law were usually captured by a town-officer, at the verbal command of the provost, who administered justice in an off-hand way behind his counter, amidst miscellaneous dealings with customers, and ordered off alleged delinquents to prison without keeping any record of the transaction. Dismission from confinement took place in the like abrupt and arbitrary manner.

As will be observed, there was still much of an old-world air about Peebles. The transit to and from it was tedious and expensive. In winter, when the roads were snowed up, the inhabitants were put to great straits. On one occasion, the town was without salt for a fortnight. Frequently, the carriers could not get forward until parties of men went to clear the way. Of this snowing-up I retain vivid recollections, for, there being no bank in the town, my father could not pay his workmen their weekly wages until the arrival of the carrier, who was fixed in a snow-wreath ten miles distant. On such occasions, there was a dearth of fuel, causing the poorer classes to rely for warmth on that species of deposit from cows, mixed with coal-culm and baked in

the sun, which was used as fuel in various parts of England after the middle of last century.

Although the town had existed for a thousand years or more, it possessed no printing-press. Only two or three newspapers came to it in the course of a week, and these were handed about till they were in tatters. Advertisements were made by tuck of drum; the official employed for the purpose being an old soldier, a tough little man with a queue, known as 'Drummer Will.' It was told of him that he had gallantly beat a drum at the battle of Quebec until the whole regiment had perished, he alone being the survivor, and still vigorously beating his drum like a hero amidst fire and shot. Now settled down as an officer of the civic corporation, Drummer Will usually performed the triple duty of acting as jailer, constable, and agent for advertisements, which, after collecting an audience, he read by means of a pair of Dutch spectacles, and always pronounced *adverteesements.*

Robert describes the way that the more affluent burghers often spent their evenings.

'The absence of excitement in the ordinary life of a small town, made it next to impossible for a man of social spirit to avoid convivial evening meetings, and these were frequent. The favourite *howff* was an old-fashioned inn kept by a certain Miss Ritchie, a clever sprightly woman of irreproachable character, who, so far from the obsequiousness of her profession, required to be treated by her guests with no small amount of deference, and, in especial, would never allow them to have liquor after a decent hour. When that hour arrived—I think it was the Forbes-Mackenzie hour of eleven—it was vain

for them to ask a fresh supply. "Na, na; gang hame to your wives and bairns," was her dictum, and it was impossible for them to sit much longer. "Meg Dods" in *St Ronan's Well* is what I would call a rough and strong portraiture of Miss Ritchie—a Miss Ritchie of a lower sphere of life—and, if I may judge from a conversation I once had with Sir Walter Scott regarding the supposed prototype, I think he knew little about her. The *tout-ensemble* of the actual inn—a laird's town-house of the seventeenth century, with a *grande cour* in front, accessible by an arched gate surmounted by a dial—with the little low-ceiled rooms, and Miss Ritchie herself, ruling house, and servants, and guests with her clear head and ready tongue, jocosely sharp with everybody, forms a picture in my mind to which I should now vainly seek to find a parallel.

'Our neighbour, Laird Grieve, the aged joiner and undertaker, had a son, "Tam," who succeeded to his business. Tam was a blithe, hearty man, with an old-fashioned gentility in his aspect, and was a general favourite in the town, which he served for many years in the capacity of a bailie. He had a small carpenter's shop, and a saw-pit, and an appearance of uncut logs about his premises; but I never could connect the idea of either work or business with Bailie Grieve. He continued, however, all through life to have a kind of eminence as a maker of fishing-rods; and as a sort of stand-by in his pinched circumstances, he followed his father's profession of making peg-tops, or *peeries*, for the school-boys. His dingy little workshop—a low thatched building in which there was a strange confusion of work-benches, turning-lathes, bits of wood, and shavings—was therefore an interesting resort for youth. Tam was

also an excellent angler, in which capacity he was well known to the late Professor Wilson.

'It used to be very pleasant, in returning to Peebles as a visitor, to call upon Tam at his neat, small, white house, near the bottom of the old town, where, in a miniature terraced garden with a neat white railing, I saw tulips for the first time, and thought them the prettiest objects in creation. Being a widower and without children, the bailie had an old woman, Bet, for a general servant and housekeeper; and her reception of us, as she opened the door, and shewed us into her master's little, low-ceiled parlour, was always of an enthusiastic character. Presently there would be a gust of kindly and somewhat vociferous talk, Bet standing within the door (but holding it by the handle) all the time, and lending in her word whenever she had occasion. Dear traits of the old simple world, how delightful to recall you in these scenes of comparative refinement and comparative stiffness and frigidity!'

In Robert's reminiscences of the town in our boyish days, he omits to notice some traits of character essentially Scotch, which I should imagine are now so entirely obliterated as to be unknown even by the living generation.

Among that considerable part of the population who lived down closes and in old thatched cottages, news circulated at third or fourth hand, or was merged in conversation on religious or other topics. My brother and I derived much enjoyment, not to say instruction, from the singing of old ballads, and the telling of legendary stories, by a kind old female relative, the wife of a decayed tradesman, who dwelt in one of

the ancient closes. At her humble fireside, under the canopy of a huge chimney, where her half-blind and superannuated husband sat dozing in a chair, the battle of Corunna and other prevailing news was strangely mingled with disquisitions on the Jewish wars. The source of this interesting conversation was a well-worn copy of L'Estrange's translation of Josephus, a small folio of date 1720. The envied possessor of the work was Tam Fleck, 'a flichty chield,' as he was considered, who, not particularly steady at his legitimate employment, struck out a sort of profession by going about in the evenings with his Josephus, which he read as the current news; the only light he had for doing so being usually that imparted by the flickering blaze of a piece of parrot coal. It was his practice not to read more than from two to three pages at a time, interlarded with sagacious remarks of his own by way of foot-notes, and in this way he sustained an extraordinary interest in the narrative. Retailing the matter with great equability in different households, Tam kept all at the same point of information, and wound them up with a corresponding anxiety as to the issue of some moving event in Hebrew annals. Although in this way he went through a course of Josephus yearly, the novelty somehow never seemed to wear off.

'Weel, Tam, what 's the news the nicht?' would old Geordie Murray say, as Tam entered with his Josephus under his arm, and seated himself at the family fireside.

'Bad news, bad news,' replied Tam. 'Titus has begun to besiege Jerusalem—it 's gaun to be a terrible business;' and then he opened his budget of intelligence, to which all paid the most reverential attention. The protracted and severe famine which was endured by the

besieged Jews, was a theme which kept several families in a state of agony for a week; and when Tam in his readings came to the final conflict and destruction of the city by the Roman general, there was a perfect paroxysm of horror. At such séances my brother and I were delighted listeners. All honour to the memory of Tam Fleck.

In the old-town community, where he often figured, our more immediate paternal ancestors, as enjoying the fruits of uninterrupted frugality and industry for centuries, had attained to a somewhat enviable position. My grandfather, William Chambers, continuing the occupation of his predecessors, carried on the manufacture of woollen and linen cloths, on what would now be called an antiquated and meagre scale, in a long thatched building at the corner of a quadrangle which in old times had formed the market-place of the town. One end of this homely structure was his dwelling, consisting of two apartments; and in the other were several hand-looms and warping machines. All the family laboured according to their ability, and the whole arrangements were of a thrifty kind, not absolutely enjoined by the pressure of daily wants, but conformable to the ordinary usages of the period.

The whole establishment might be taken as a type of a state of society once common in the smaller provincial towns of Scotland; and contrasting it with the present state of things, we may observe the remarkable advances which have been made in the country since the latter part of the eighteenth century. Here was a man of some consideration—an independent manufacturer, so to speak—and in no respect penurious, living in a style inferior to that of any mechanic in the present day

with a wage of only twenty shillings a week. No elegances, nor what we now deem indispensable comforts. When people are inclined to grumble with their accommodations, and to speak of the dearth of luxuries, would it not be well for them, in however small a degree, to compare their condition with that of their grandfathers three-quarters of a century ago?

Upright, pious, and benevolent, my grandfather very acceptably held the office of an elder of the church for the last thirty years of his existence. To the poor and wretched he was an ever-ready friend, adviser, and consoler. I have heard it related that on Sunday evenings he would return exhausted with his religious peregrinations and exercises—having, in the course of a few hours, visited perhaps as many as a dozen sick or dying persons, and offered up an extempore and suitable prayer with each. At his death, in 1799, this worthy man left his widow and second son, William, to carry on the business; my father James, the elder son, having about the same period begun his cotton-manufacturing concern.

Of this widow, my grandmother, I retain some recollections. According to an old custom in Scotland, she was, though married, known only by her maiden name, which was Margaret Kerr. Margaret was a little woman, of plain appearance, a great stickler on points of controversial divinity, a rigorous critic of sermons, and a severe censor of what she considered degenerating manners. She possessed a good deal of 'character,' and might almost be taken for the original of Mause Headrigg. As the wife of a ruling elder, she possibly imagined that she was entitled to exercise a certain authority in ecclesiastical matters. An anecdote is told

of her having once taken the venerable Dr Dalgliesh, the parish minister, through hands. In presence of a number of neighbours, she thought fit to lecture him on that particularly delicate subject, his wife's dress: 'It was a sin and a shame to see sae mickle finery.'

The minister did not deny the charge, but dexterously encountered her with the Socratic method of argument: 'So, Margaret, you think that ornament is useless and sinful in a lady's dress?'

'Certainly I do.'

'Then, may I ask why you wear that ribbon around your cap? A piece of cord would surely do quite as well.'

Disconcerted with this unforeseen turn of affairs, Margaret determinedly rejoined in an under-tone: 'Ye 'll no hae lang to speer sic a like question.'

Next day her cap was bound with a piece of white tape; and never afterwards, till the day of her death, did she wear a ribbon, or any morsel of ornament. I am doubtful if we could match this out of Scotland. For a novelist to depict characters of this kind, he would require to see them in real life; no imagination could reach them. Sir Walter Scott both saw and talked with them, for they were not extinct in his day.

The mortifying rebuff about the ribbon perhaps had some influence in making my ancestress a Seceder. As she lived near the manse, I am afraid she must have been a good deal of a thorn in the side of the parish minister, notwithstanding all the palliatives of her good-natured husband, the elder. At length an incident occurred, which sent her abruptly off to a recently erected meeting-house, to which a promising young preacher, Mr Leckie, had been appointed.

It was a bright summer morning about five o'clock, when Margaret left her husband's side as usual, and went out to see her cow attended to. Before three minutes had elapsed, her husband was aroused by her coming in with dismal cries: 'Eh, sirs! eh, sirs! did I ever think to live to see the day? O man, O man, O William—this is a terrible thing indeed! Could I ever have thought to see 't?'

'Gracious, woman!' exclaimed the worthy elder, by this time fully awake, 'what is 't? Is the coo deid?' for it seemed to him that no greater calamity could have been expected to produce such doleful exclamations.

'The coo deid!' responded Margaret; 'waur, waur, ten times waur. There 's Dr Dalgliesh only now gaun hame at five o'clock in the morning. It 's awfu', it 's awfu'! What will things come to?'

The elder, though a pattern of propriety himself, is not recorded as having taken any but a mild view of the minister's conduct, more particularly as he knew that the patron of the parish was at Miss Ritchie's inn, and that the reverend divine might have been detained rather late with him against his will. The strenuous Margaret drew no such charitable conclusions. She joined the Secession congregation next day, and never again attended the parish church.

CHAPTER II.

EARLY YEARS CONTINUED—1800 TO 1813.

BEFORE introducing my mother to the modest mansion, the first home of her married life, situated on the north bank of the Eddleston Water, a small tributary of the Tweed, something characteristic of old Scotland may be said of her parentage: and here we return to Robert's manuscript.

'In the middle of the last century, the farm of Jedderfield, situated on the hill-face above Neidpath Castle, a mile from Peebles, the property of the Earl of March, was occupied, at the rent of eighteen pounds, by an honest man named David Grieve. While the noble proprietor was pursuing his career of sport and debauchery in London—the course which was consummated by him many years after, under the title which he finally acquired of Duke of Queensberry (familiarly *Old Q.*), the tenant, David Grieve, reared on that small bit of his lordship's domains a family of fourteen children, most of whom floated on by their own merits to much superior positions in life—one to be a merchant in Manchester, two to similar positions in Edinburgh, one to be a surgeon in the East India Company's service,

and so forth. This family afforded an example of the virtuous frugal life of the rural people of Scotland previous to that extension of industry which brought wealth and many comforts into our country. The breakfast was oatmeal porridge; the supper, a thinner farinaceous composition named sowens; for the dinner, there was seldom butcher-meat: the ordinary mess was a thin broth called *Lenten kail*, composed of a ball of oatmeal kneaded up with butter, boiled in an infusion of cabbage, and eaten with barley or pease-meal bannocks. Strange as it may seem, a people of many fine qualities were reared in this plain style, a people of bone and muscle, mentally as well as physically—"buirdly chiels and clever hizzies," as Burns says. There was not a particle of luxury in that Sabine life; hardly a single article of the kinds sold in shops was used. The food was all obtained from the farm, and the clothing was wholly of homespun. I cannot be under any mistake about it, for I have often heard the household and its ways described by my maternal grandmother, who was David Grieve's eldest daughter. Even the education of the children was conducted at home, the mother giving them lessons while seated at her spinning-wheel.

'Janet, the eldest girl, was wedded at eighteen by a middle-aged farmer, named William Gibson, who rented a large tract of pasturage belonging to Dr Hay of Haystoun. This farm, called Newby, was not less than seven miles long; it commenced near Haystoun, about two miles from Peebles, and at the other extremity bordered on Blackhouse, in Selkirkshire, where the Ettrick Shepherd spent his youthful days. The Gibsons were a numerous clan in Tweeddale, and some of them, including the

tenant of Newby, were comparatively wealthy.' In marrying William Gibson, Janet Grieve was thought to make an enviable match, and of this there were some outward tokens. The marriage took place in 1768. On the day preceding the event, Janet's 'providing,' which was sumptuous, was despatched in a cart from Jedderfield to what was to be her new home; the load of various articles being conspicuously surmounted by a spinning-wheel, decorated with ribbons of different colours. In the present day, we should in vain look for this old farm-establishment, for every vestige of it is gone; and we only discover the spot, which is the edge of a bank overhanging Haystoun Burn, by a decayed tree that flourished in the corner of the small garden.

'There was a much less frugal style of life at Newby than at Jedderfield. Although the homestead consisted of only a cottage, containing a kitchen and parlour, with the appendages of a barn, &c., it gave shelter every night to groups of vagrant people, the multitude of whom was a matter of remark and lamentation a few years before to Fletcher of Salton and other patriots. On a Saturday night there would be as many as twenty of these poor creatures received by the farmer for food and lodging till Monday morning. Some of them, who had established a good character, were entertained in the farmer's *ha'*, where himself, his wife, and servants ordinarily sat, as was the fashion of that time. The family rather relished this society, for from hardly any other source did they ever obtain any of the news of the country. One well-remembered guest of this order was a robust old man named Andrew Gemmells, who had been a dragoon in his youth, but had long assumed the blue gown and badge of a *king's bedesman*, or licensed

beggar, together with the meal-pocks and long staff. A rough and ready tongue, and a picturesque if not venerable aspect, had recommended Andrew in many households superior to my grandfather's.

'Sir Walter Scott, who commemorates him under the name of Edie Ochiltree, tells how a laird was found one day playing at draughts with Gemmells, the only mark of distinction of rank presented in the case being that the laird sat in his parlour, and the *blue-gown* in the court outside, the board being placed on the sill of the open window between. I can corroborate the view which we thus acquire of the old beggar's position by stating that the guidwife of Newby learned the game of draughts —commonly called in Scotland the *dam-brod*—from Andrew Gemmells, and often played with him at her hall fireside. Somewhat to his disgust, the pupil became in time the equal of the master, and a visitor one day backed her against him for a guinea, which the old man did not scruple to stake, and which he could easily have paid if unsuccessful, as he carried a good deal of money about his person. When it appeared, however, that she was about to gain the game, Andrew lost his temper, or affected to do so, and, hastily snatching up the board, threw the "men" into the ash-pit. Andrew circulated all through the counties of Peebles, Selkirk, and Roxburgh, going from house to house, and getting an *awmos* (alms), with lodging if necessary, at each, appreciated as an original wherever he came—everywhere civilly and even kindly treated. It must have been on the whole a pleasant life for the old man, but one that could only be so while the primitive simple style of farm-life subsisted—that is, while the farmer, his wife, and children, still herded in the same room with their

servants, and were not above holding converse with the remembered beggar. Perhaps poor Andrew found at last that things were taking an unfavourable turn for him, for he died in an *out-house* at a farm in the parish of Roxburgh, in the month of February too (1794).

'My grandmother and her maids were generally up at an early hour in the morning to attend to the ewes, and their time for going to rest must have consequently been an early one. There was always, however, a period, called "between gloaming and supper-time," during which another industry was practised. Then it was that the wheels were brought out for the spinning of the yarn which was to constitute the clothing of the family. And I often think that it must have been a pleasing sight in that humble hall—the handsome young mistress amidst her troop of maidens, all busy with foot and finger, while the shepherds and their master, and one or two favoured gaberlunzies, would be telling stories or cracking jokes for the general entertainment, or some one with a good voice would be singing the songs of Ramsay and Hamilton. At a certain time of the year, the guidwife had to lay aside the ordinary little wheel, by which lint was spun, and take to the "muckle wheel," which was required for the production of woollen thread, the material of the goodman's clothes, or else the "reel," on which she reduced the product of the little wheel to hanks for the weaver. Even the Misses Hay were great lint spinners, and I suspect that their familiar acquaintance with the guidwife of Newby depended somewhat on their common devotion to the wheel.

'It was on this farm of Newby, while in the possession of Mr Gibson, in the year 1772, that there occurred a case of the sagacity of the shepherd's dog, which has

often been adverted to in books, but seldom with correctness as to the details. A store-farmer, in another part of the county, had commenced a system of sheep-stealing, which he was believed to have practised without detection for several years. At length, a ewe which had been taken amongst other sheep from Newby, reappeared on the farm, bearing a *birn* (Anglicè, brand) on her face in addition to that of her true owner. The animal was believed to have been attracted to her former home by the instinct of affection towards the lamb from whom she had been separated, and her return was the more remarkable as it involved the necessity of her crossing the river Tweed. The shepherd, James Hislop, did not fail to report the reappearance of the ewe to his master, and it was not long before they ascertained whose brand it was which had been impressed over Mr Gibson's. As many sheep had been for some time missed out of the stock, it was thought proper that Hislop should pay a visit to Mr Murdison's farm, where he quickly discovered a considerable number of sheep bearing Mr Gibson's brand O, all having Mr Murdison's, the letter T, superimposed. In short, Murdison and his shepherd Miller were apprehended, tried, convicted, and duly hanged in the Grassmarket—a startling exhibition, considering the position of the sufferers in life, and made the more so by the humbler man choosing to come upon the scaffold in his "dead-clothes." The long-continued success of the crime of these wretched men was found to have depended on the wonderful human-like sense of Miller's dog *Yarrow*. Accompanied by *Yarrow*, the man would take an opportunity of visiting a neighbouring farm and looking through the flocks. He had there only to point out certain sheep

to his sagacious companion, who would come that night, select each animal so pointed out, bring them together, and drive them across country, and, moreover, across the Tweed, to his master's farm, never once undergoing detection. The story ran that the dog was hanged soon after his master, as being thought a dangerous creature in a country full of flocks; but I would hope that this was a false rumour, and my grandmother, who might have known all the circumstances connected with the case, never affirmed its truth.'

About 1780, Mr Gibson retired with a moderate competency to Peebles, where he concluded his days. Here were born to him a girl and boy, who at his death were left in charge of their mother and several appointed guardians. Unfortunately, as regards these children, their mother made a second marriage with a teacher, Mr Robert Noble, and in the short space of two to three years she was again left a widow, with an addition of two boys, Robert and David, without any provision whatever from this new connection. To the two young Gibsons, Jean and her brother William, this affair led to much domestic unhappiness, along with a desire to escape from it in the best way possible. Jean grew up an uncommonly beautiful girl, and being in some small degree an heiress, had a number of admirers, one of them being my father, to whom she was married; and the young pair began housekeeping in the neat mansion already described.

This marriage took place in May 1799. I was born in less than a year afterwards, and, as has been said, Robert was born in 1802. My furthest stretch of memory pictures my mother as that gentle ladylike

person already alluded to by Robert; punctiliously tasteful in dress, and beautiful in features, but with an expression of blended pensiveness and cheerfulness, indicative of the position into which she had been brought. Even as a child I could see she had sorrows —perhaps regrets. It might have been safe to say that her union had been 'ill fated.'

It is not, however, to be assumed from this circumstance that my father was undeserving of regard. He possessed numerous estimable qualities, but in association with these, a pliancy of disposition, which, according to the language of the world, renders a man 'his own worst enemy.' He was inconsiderate, easily misled, wanted fortitude, and was constantly exposed to imposition. Aspiring in his tastes and notions, with a fund of humour, and an immense love for music, he may be said to have taken a lead in the town for his general knowledge. He made some progress in scientific attainments. Affected like others at the time with the fascinating works of James Ferguson on astronomy, he had a kind of rage for that branch of study, which he pursued by means of a tolerably good telescope, in company with Mungo Park, the African traveller, who had settled as a surgeon in Peebles, and one or two other acquaintances.

He often lamented that his parents had not followed out a design of bestowing on him a liberal education. Supposing him to have been under some delusion in this respect, it could, I think, have been nothing but a sincere love of literature that induced him to acquire a copy of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, at a time when works of this expensive nature were purchased only by

the learned and affluent. The possession of this voluminous mass of knowledge in no small degree helped to create a taste for reading in my own, and more particularly my brother's mind; at all events, a familiarity with the volumes of this great work is among the oldest of my recollections. Nor can I omit to mention other agreeable reminiscences of these early days. My father, as stated, was a tolerable, and certainly untiring performer on the German flute, an instrument which shared his affections with his telescope. Seated at the open window of his little parlour in calm summer gloamings, he would play an endless series of Scottish airs, which might be heard along the Eddleston Water; then, as the clear silvery moon and planets arose to illumine the growing darkness, out would be brought his telescope, which being planted carefully on its stand on my mother's tea-table, there ensued a critical inspection of the firmament and its starry host. From circumstances of this kind, discussions about the satellites of Jupiter and the belts of Saturn are embedded in reminiscences of my early years.

Once or twice a year my father had occasion to go to Glasgow in connection with business arrangements. The journey, upwards of forty miles, was performed on foot, in company with Jamie Hall, a stocking-manufacturer, who was somewhat of an oddity. They were usually two days on the road. Hall made a point of paying his way in pairs of stockings, of which he carried a choice stock on his back, calculated to settle all the reckonings till he arrived at the Spoutmouth in the Gallowgate. In one of these visits to Glasgow, my father, through his love of music, purchased a spinet, which, arriving on the top of the carrier's cart, created

some perturbation in the household. It was a heedless acquisition, for there was no place to put it, except in the garret, among heaps of warps and bundles of weft. There, accordingly, where there was barely standing-room, the unfortunate spinet was deposited, and became an object of musical indulgence sometimes for hours, in which enjoyment all sublunary cares were forgot.

His musical accomplishments rendered my father's society peculiarly attractive. He had a good voice, and sung the Scottish songs with considerable effect; consequently, he was much in request at convivialities, to which, from a fondness for lively conversation, he had no particular objection. There, indeed, lay my father's weakness—too slight a regard for personal responsibilities. His indifference in this respect could not fail to throw additional obligations on my mother, whose destiny it was to confront and overcome innumerable embarrassments. Acquainted with only the elementary branches of education, and unskilled in any fashionable accomplishments, she nevertheless possessed a strong understanding. I might truly say that, both in appearance and manners, she was by nature a lady, and circumstances made her a heroine. Delicate in frame, and with generally poor health, she was ill adapted for the fatigues and anxieties which she had to encounter; but such was her tact and dexterity, as well as her determined resolution, that she bore and overcame trials which I feel assured would have sunk many in like circumstances to the depths of despair. What she did may afterwards appear. Meanwhile, a number of young children demanded her care.

Robert and I had a strange congenital malformation. We were sent into the world with six fingers on each

hand, and six toes on each foot. By the neighbours, as I understand, this was thought particularly lucky; but it proved anything but lucky for one of us. In my own case, the redundant members were easily removed, leaving scarcely a trace of their presence; but in the case of Robert, the result was very different. The supernumerary toes on the outside of the foot were attached to, or formed part of, the metatarsal bones, and were so badly amputated as to leave delicate protuberances, calculated to be a torment for life. This unfortunate circumstance, by producing a certain degree of lameness and difficulty in walking, no doubt exerted a permanent influence over my brother's habits and feelings. Indisposed to indulge in the boisterous exercise of other boys—studious, docile in temperament, and excelling in mental qualifications—he shot ahead of me in all matters of education. Though dissimilar in various ways, we, however, associated together from our earliest years. It almost seemed as if a difference of tastes and aptitudes produced a degree of mutual reliance and co-operation. With a more practical and exigent tone of mind than Robert, I might possibly have made a decent progress at school, had my teachers at all sympathised with me. As it happened, I look back upon my school experiences with anything but satisfaction. A very few particulars will suffice.

My first school was one kept by a poor old widow, Kirsty Cranston, who, according to her own account, was qualified to carry forward her pupils as far as reading the Bible; but to this proficiency there was the reasonable exception of leaving out difficult words, such as Maher-shalal-hash-baz. These, she told the children, might be made 'a pass-over,' and accordingly

it was the rule of the establishment to let them alone. From this humble seminary, I was in time transferred to the burgh school, then under the charge of Mr James Gray, author of a popular treatise on arithmetic. The fee, here, was two shillings and twopence per quarter for reading and writing, and sixpence additional for arithmetic. The pupils were the children of nearly all classes in the town and rural districts around. They numbered about a hundred and fifty boys and girls. Probably, a third of them in summer were barefooted, but this was less a necessity than a choice; at anyrate, it well suited the locality. In front of the school-house lay the town green, and beside it was the Tweed, in which the school-boys were constantly paddling.

Gray was a man of mild temperament, and a good teacher, but his pupils entertained little respect for his abilities. Yielding, like too many others at the time, to over-indulgence, he sometimes went off on a carouse, and entered the school considerably inebriated, which was deemed vastly amusing. Nor did this sort of conduct incur any public censure. The magistrates and council, whose duty it was to call him to account, were associates in his revels, and appreciated him as a boon-companion. When elevated to a certain pitch, he sung a good song about Nelson and his brave British tars; and this in itself, in the heat of the French war, extenuated many shortcomings. At this school too, as is usual with such seminaries in Scotland, the Bible was read as a class-book, but with no kind of reverence, or even decorum. The verses were bawled out at the pitch of the voice, without the slightest regard to intonation or elocutionary effect. When the teacher was temporarily absent, there took place a battle of the

books—one side of the school against the other. On such occasions, the girls, not choosing to be belligerents, discreetly retired under the tables, leaving the boys to carry on the war, in which dog-eared Bibles without boards, resembling bunches of leaves, handily flew about as missiles. To have to look back on this as a place of youthful instruction!

There was another stage in my educational career. I was advanced to the grammar-school, as it is called, a superior burgh establishment, of which Mr James Sloane was head-master. Here, I was introduced to Latin, for which the fee was five shillings a quarter. My progress was very indifferent. Of course it was very stupid of me not intuitively appreciating this branch of learning, and likewise in feeling that its acquisition was a cheerless drudgery. Like others perhaps in like circumstances, I have lived to regret my inattention, or call it, incapacity; for even the small knowledge of Latin which I did acquire during two years of painful study, has not failed to be of considerable service in various respects.

Mr Sloane was held in general esteem, and justly reputed as an excellent teacher. He grounded well, and apt scholars got on famously with him. My brother, who, like myself, was advanced from the burgh to the grammar school, became a proficient and favourite pupil; his mind, as it were, taking naturally to instruction in the classics. The healthy locality of the school was much in its favour, and attracted boarders from Edinburgh, the colonies, and elsewhere. The association of town scholars with boys from a distance was a pleasing feature in the establishment, and proved mutually advantageous. I could have nothing to say

derogatory of the method of culture, but for the severity of discipline which was heedlessly pursued, according to what, unfortunately, was too common at the period.

The truth is, violence held rule almost everywhere—the desperate warlike struggle in which the country was engaged, apparently postponing all pacific and humane notions. Boys—the boy-nature being neither studied nor understood—were flogged and buffeted unmercifully, both at home and at school; and they in turn beat and domineered over each other according to their capacity, harried birds' nests, pelted cats, and exercised every other species of cruelty within their power. A coarse bustling carter in Peebles, known by the facetious nickname of 'Puddle Michty,' used to leave his old worn-out and much-abused horses to die on the public green, and there, without incurring reprobation, the boys amused themselves by, day after day, battering the poor prostrate animals with showers of stones till life was extinct. In the business of elementary instruction, the law of kindness was as yet scarcely thought of. Orders were sometimes given to teachers not by any means to spare the rod. 'I've brought you our Jock, mind ye lick him weel!' would a mother of Spartan temperament say to Mr Gray, at the same time dragging forward a struggling young savage to be entered as a pupil; and so Jock was formally resigned to the dominion of the tawse.

I can never forget a scene which took place in Mr Sloane's seminary one summer afternoon. In the morning of that day, a sensation had been created by the intelligence that two of the boarders, gentlemen's sons from Edinburgh, had absconded, and that two town-constables—one of them Drummer Will—had

been despatched in search of them. The youths were caught, brought back in disgrace, and were now to suffer a punishment adequate to the gravity of the offence. Sullen and terrified, the two culprits stood before the assembled school; the two town-officers in their scarlet coats sitting as a guard within the doorway. The usual hum ceased. There was a deathlike stillness. First reproaching the offenders with their highly improper conduct, the teacher ordered them instantly to strip for flogging. The boys resisted, and were seized by an assistant and the two officers. With clothes in disorder, they were laid across a long desk-like table, the rise of which in the middle offered that degree of convexity which was favourable to the application of the tawse. Kicking and screaming, they suffered the humiliating infliction, and the school was forthwith dismissed for the day. Such things at the period were matters of course, even of approbation, and therefore it would be wrong to condemn teachers who fell in with the general fashion. Teaching, it was imagined, could not be conducted otherwise—school, like army, flogging was an authorised national institution.

Unless for the purpose of throwing light on past times, I should not think of further alluding to Mr Sloane's course of school discipline, which I have reason to believe did not greatly differ from what prevailed elsewhere. Force was in the ascendant, as it had been a hundred years previously in schools high and low everywhere. A character in one of the stories of Fielding, coarsely but facetiously observes in allusion to his instruction in the classics, that he still bears the marks of *Homo* on his person. I can quite believe it. An

old friend resident in London avows, that after a long period of years he still bears about his person marks of the castigations to which, for very trifling shortcomings in his lessons, he was inhumanly subjected at Sloane's school at Peebles; that he looks back on his educational career in his native town with horror.

I would not for a moment aver that Mr Sloane acted on a principle of deliberate brutality. He fell in with the common usages of his craft, and at the time referred to, yielded too frequently to impulses of temper, which I have no doubt he lived to regret—perhaps to mourn over in the final dreams of retributive memory. Although the tawse formed the authorised weapon of punishment in his seminary, I have known Sloane in the heat of passion to use a ruler when it came readily to hand. On one occasion, for failing to answer a question in Latin grammar concerning a particular noun, I received a vengeful blow on the head with a ruler, which raised a lump that did not disappear for a fortnight. This was mere wantonness of tyranny over children who had no power of defence. The strange thing, as it now appears, is how such coarse chastisements should have been publicly tolerated. The explanation is easy. The complaints of those who suffered from the violence of teachers were not listened to by parents, whose notions of discipline generally lay in the same direction. As yet, the power of kindness and gentle suasion was scarcely understood. Appeals to the higher sentiments, along with encouraging explanations regarding the disciplinary and etymological value of Latin, did not seem to be thought of by teachers. No doubt, such personal assaults as I have seen at school would now be viewed very gravely at common-

law. At the time I speak of, however, there was practically neither recourse nor sympathy. On all hands magistrates connived at cruelties in schools. At Peebles, they lent the town officers to assist. Let no one speak to me of the 'good old times.' They were times marked by the most odious barbarity. Education was carried on in an atmosphere of tears.

As Sloane's pupils were numerous and of different ages, the juniors fell to the charge of an assistant, hired for the purpose. The assistants were usually a poor set; who seemingly, like the unhappy usher facetiously pictured by Goldsmith, were fain to put up with drudgeries for the sake of a meagre salary along with the comforts of board and lodging. For the most part they had some distressing bodily infirmity which excluded them from ordinary occupations. In my recollection, one of these dilapidated beings, named Howey, stands before me, wearing a second-hand black coat much too big for his figure. Howey excelled in the art of flogging, and was kept in no restraint. With a fierce glare, he eyed boys as if they had been made only to be thrashed. Roaming over the department under his charge, his right arm swung strangely backwards and forwards, apparently from some imperfection in the shoulder-joint. In his hand he carried very formidable tawse, the points of which were hardened by burning to give them due efficacy, and inspire additional terror. So provided, his loose arm, in its pendulum-like motions, was ever ready to inflict a shower of blows on the head and shoulders of any unhappy urchin who incurred his displeasure. This wretch was discharged in consequence, I believe, of some impropriety. The boys over whom he had

exerted his mean tyranny, rejoiced in his dismissal, and were disposed to pelt him on quitting the town, but he got away unobserved.

Another assistant whom I recollect was of a different stamp. He was a young man named Robbie Ballantyne, from somewhere in Selkirkshire, and while a good scholar, was of a placid disposition. Robbie laboured under the infirmity of a short leg and a long one; the short one being supplemented to the proper length by a wooden stump fastened by straps to the leg. My chief recollection of Robbie concerns a particular Sunday morning, when all the boys in the school were assembled in Mr Sloane's dining-room, to be put through their facings in the Shorter Catechism, preliminary to being marched in double file to the parish church. This was an old institution in the business of teaching. Schoolmasters charged themselves with giving a certain degree of religious instruction to their pupils, which was generally acceptable; for as yet there was no great diversity of opinion on spiritual matters. As in other branches of culture, Sloane came up to the mark as a catechist.

There was one pleasant peculiarity in the Sunday morning meeting. The tawse were laid aside, and there prevailed that kind of subdued quietness which characterised all the proceedings of the day. The boys hardly spoke above their breath. In making his rounds, with a copy of the Catechism in his hand, Sloane discovered that I with another boy, Walter Turnbull, could not properly answer one of those subtle questions for which this venerable compendium of divinity has been renowned. Memory had for the moment failed. What was to be done? The offence was unpardonable, but corporal punishment could not, in respect for the

day, be inflicted. Our schoolmaster got over the difficulty. The two culprits were condemned to remain imprisoned in the dining-room under charge of Robbie Ballantyne, while all the other boys went to church. We two accordingly remained in durance, occasionally thrumming at the Catechism, and at other times wistfully looking out of window towards the Tweed and the Newby hills towering up beyond in the glowing light of a summer day—Robbie, our jailor, stumping about as sentinel on guard, and not disposed to take a severe view of our delinquency. On the return of the long train of boys from church, Turnbull and I were able to give a correct answer to the question that had puzzled us, and were graciously dismissed. I think Sloane was a little ashamed of the affair. He had acted under one of his ungovernable outbursts of temper. Keeping boys from church was certainly original in the way of penal discipline.

Laying aside any consideration of the elementary branches and the classics, the amount of instruction at the schools at Peebles was exceedingly slender. At not one of them was there taught any history, geography, or physical science. There was not in my time a map in any of the schools—a fact not very creditable either to the teachers or the inhabitants. There was, however, nothing singular in this deficiency. As yet, notwithstanding the number of burgh and parish schools, there was a general meagreness in the routine of education throughout the country. The people had not awakened to the advantages to be derived from a knowledge of the higher branches of instruction. Possibly, I have said more than enough of my school remembrances; and I finish with stating that my

entire education, which terminated when I was thirteen years of age, cost, books included, somewhere about six pounds. So little was taught, that my education, properly speaking, began only when I was left to pick it up as opportunities offered in after-life.

There are a few circumstances of a pleasing nature mixed up with these dismal recollections. I refer to rural rambles and books. I spent many hours on the picturesque banks of the Tweed at Neidpath, and in angling excursions to Manor Water.

Though not disposed to be so sedentary as my brother, I had scarcely a less ardent attachment to books. These, however, I possessed no means of purchasing. To procure the objects of my desire, I executed with a knife various little toys, which I exchanged for juvenile books with my better provided companions. The room occupied by my brother and myself was more like a workshop than a sleeping apartment, on account of the disorder which was caused by these mechanical operations.

In the notes left by my brother, he corroborates my reminiscences of the school discipline at Peebles, but as feeling much indebted to Mr Sloane's instructions, he refrains from specifying incidents such as came under my notice. Robert gives the following account of his early school-days.

'My first two years of schooling were spent amidst the crowd of children attending Mr Gray's seminary. On the easy terms of two shillings and twopence per quarter, I was well grounded by the master and his helper in English. The entire expense must have been only about eighteen shillings—a fact sufficient to

explain how Scotch people of the middle class appear to be so well educated in comparison with their southern compatriots. It was prior to the time when the intellectual system was introduced. We were taught to read the Bible and Barrie's *Collection*, and to spell words. No attempt was made to enlighten us as to the meaning of any of the lessons. It was a strange, rough, noisy, crowded scene this burgh school. No refinement of any kind appeared in it. Nothing kept the boys in any sort of order but flagellation with the tawse. Many people thought the master did not punish enough. This idea, in fact, was the cause of an act of wild justice, which I saw executed one day in the school.

'The reader must imagine the school-hum going on in a dull monotone, when suddenly the door burst open, and in walked a middle-aged woman of the humbler class, carrying something in her right hand under her apron. The school sunk into silence in an instant. With flashing eyes and excited visage, she called out: "Where is Jock Forsyth?" Jock had maltreated a son of hers on the green, and she had come to inflict vengeance upon him before the whole school. Jock's conscious soul trembled at the sight, and she had no difficulty in detecting him. Ere the master had recovered from the astonishment which her intrusion had created, the fell virago had pounced upon the culprit, had dragged him into the middle of the floor, and there began to belabour him with the domestic tawse, which she had brought for the purpose. The screams of the boy, the anxious entreaties of the master, with his constant "Wifie, wifie, be quiet, be quiet," and the agitated feeling which began to pervade the school,

formed a scene which defies words to paint it. Nor did Meg desist till she had given Master Forsyth reason to remember her to the latest day of his existence. She then took her departure, only remarking to Mr Gray, as she prepared to close the door: "Jock Forsyth will no' meddle with my Jamie again in a hurry."

'Boys for whom a superior education was desired were usually passed on at the beginning of their third year to the grammar-school—the school in which the classics were taught, but which also had one or two advanced classes for English and writing. This was an example of an institution which has affected the fortunes of Scotsmen not much less than the parish schools. Every burgh has one, partly supported out of public funds. For a small fee (in the Peebles grammar-school it was only five shillings a quarter), a youth of the middle classes gets a good grounding in Latin and Greek, fitting him for the university; and it is mainly, I believe, through this superior education, so easily attained, that so many of the youth of our northern region are inspired with the ambition which leads them upwards to professional life in their own country, or else sends them abroad in quest of the fortune hard to find at home. I observe, while writing these pages, the advertisement of an academy in England, where, besides sixty pounds by way of board, the fees for tuition amount to twenty-five. For this twenty-five pounds, a Scottish burgher of my young days could have five sons carried through a complete classical course. The difference is overwhelmingly in favour of the Scotch grammar-school, as far as the money matter is concerned. And thus it will appear that the good education which has enabled me to address so much literature, of whatever

value, to the public during the last forty-five years, never cost my parents so much as ten pounds.

'There was a bookseller in Peebles: a great fact. There had not always been one; but some years before my entrance upon existence, a decent man named Alexander Elder had come to the town and established himself as a dealer in intellectual wares. He was a very careful and sober man, and in the end, as was fitting, became rich in comparison with many of his neighbours. It seems a curious reminiscence of my first bookseller's shop, that, on entering it, one always got a peep of a cow, which quietly chewed her cud close behind the book-shelves, such being one of Sandy's means of providing for his family. Sandy was great in Shorter Catechisms, and what he called *spells*, and school Bibles and Testaments, and in James Lumsden's (of Glasgow) halfpenny coloured pictures of the "World Turned Upside Down," the "Battle of Trafalgar," &c., and in penny chap-books of an extraordinary coarseness of language. He had stores, too, of school slates and *skeely*, of paper for copies, and of pens, or rather quills, for "made" pens were never sold then—one of which he would hand us across his counter with a civil glance over the top of his spectacles, as if saying: "Now, laddie, see and mak' a guid use o't." But Sandy was enterprising and enlightened beyond the common range of booksellers in small country towns, and had added a circulating library to his ordinary business. My father, led by his strong intellectual tastes, had early become a supporter of this institution, and thus it came about that by the time we were nine or ten years of age, my brother and I had read a considerable number of the classics of English literature, or heard our father read

them; were familiar with the comicalities of Gulliver, Don Quixote, and Peregrine Pickle; had dipped into the poetry of Pope and Goldsmith, and indulged our romantic tendencies in books of travel and adventure, which were to us scarcely less attractive than the works of pure imagination. When lately attending the Wells of Homburg, I had but one English book to amuse me, Pope's translation of the *Iliad*, and I felt it as towards myself an affecting reminiscence, that exactly fifty years had elapsed since I perused the copy from Elder's library, in a little room looking out upon the High Street of Peebles, where an English regiment was parading recruits raised for Wellington's Peninsular campaign.

'There was certainly something considerably superior to the common book-trader in my friend Alexander Elder, for his catalogue included several books striking far above the common taste, and somewhat costly withal. There was, for example, a copy of a strange and curious book of which Sir Walter Scott speaks on several occasions with great interest, a metrical history of the clan Scott, written about the time of the Revolution by one Walter Scott, a retired old soldier of the Scottish legions of Gustavus Adolphus, who describes himself unnecessarily as "no scholar," for in its rhyme, metre, and entire frame of language it is truly wretched, while yet interesting on account of the quaintness of its ideas and the information it conveys. Another of Sandy's book treasures—and the money value of them makes the term appropriate—was the *Æneidos of Virgil*, translated into Scottish verse by Gavin Douglas, bishop of Dunkeld, well known as a most interesting product of the literary mind of Scotland at the beginning of the

sixteenth century, and gratifying to our national vanity as prior to any translations of Virgil into English.

'In a fit of extraordinary enterprise, Sandy had taken into his library the successive volumes of the fourth edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and had found nobody but my father in the slightest degree interested in them. My father made a stretch with his moderate means, and took the book off Sandy's hands. It was a cumbrous article in a small house; so, after the first interest in its contents had subsided, it had been put into a chest (which it filled), and laid up in an attic beside the cotton wefts and the meal ark. Roaming about there one day, in that morning of intellectual curiosity, I lighted upon the stored book, and from that time for weeks all my spare time was spent beside the chest. It was a new world to me. I felt a profound thankfulness that such a convenient collection of human knowledge existed, and that here it was spread out like a well-plenished table before me. What the gift of a whole toy-shop would have been to most children, this book was to me. I plunged into it. I roamed through it like a bee. I hardly could be patient enough to read any one article, while so many others remained to be looked into. In that on Astronomy, the constitution of the material universe was all at once revealed to me. Henceforth I knew—what no other boy in the town then dreamed of—that there were infinite numbers of worlds besides our own, which was by comparison a very insignificant one. From the zoological articles, I gathered that the animals, familiar and otherwise, were all classified into a system through which some faint traces of a plan were discernible. Geography, of which not the slightest elements were then imparted at school,

here came before me in numberless articles and maps, expanding my narrow village world to one embracing the uttermost ends of the earth. I pitied my companions who remained ignorant of what became to me familiar knowledge. Some articles were splendidly attractive to the imagination—for example, that entitled Aërostation, which illustrated all that had been done in the way of aërial travelling from Montgolfier downwards. Another paper interested me much—that descriptive of the inquiries of Dr Saussure regarding the constitution and movement of glaciers. The biographical articles, introducing to me the great men who had laid up these stores of knowledge, or otherwise affected the destinies of their species, were devoured in rapid succession. What a year that was to me, not merely in intellectual enjoyment, but in mental formation! I believe it was my eleventh, for before I was twelve, misfortune had taken the book from us to help in satisfying creditors. It appears to me somewhat strange that, in a place so remote, so primitive, and containing so little wealth, at a time when the movement for the spread of knowledge had not yet been thought of, such an opportunity for the gratification of an inquiring young mind should have been presented. It was all primarily owing to the liberal spirit of enterprise which animated this cow-keeping country bookseller.

'The themes first presented to the young mind certainly sink into it the deepest. The sciences of which I obtained the first tracings through the *Encyclopædia*, have all through life been endeared to me above the rest. The books of imagination which I first read from Elder's library have ever borne a preference in my

heart, whatever may be the judgment of modern taste regarding them. It pains me to this day to hear severe remarks made upon Fielding and Sterne. I should feel myself to be a base ingrate if I could join in condemning men who first gave me views of social life beyond my natal village sphere, and who, by their powers of entertainment, lent such a charm to years during which material enjoyments were few. These intellectual "loves of life's young day" sometimes lead literary men in the choice of themes for their own pens. It was from such a feeling regarding Smollett, that I was induced to make an effort to set his life in a more respectful light before the world than it had previously enjoyed, while, assuredly, invited to other tasks in several respects more promising. It strikes me that gratitude to an author—also to a teacher—to any one who has benefited us intellectually —is as desirable a form of the feeling as any. I raise statues in my heart to the fictionists above named, and to many others who nowhere have statues of bronze or marble, and I likewise deem it not unfitting that there should be flower-crowned miniatures in my bosom of James Sloane and Sandy Elder.'

I can unite in these commendations. With Elder's field of literature laid open to us, Robert and I read at a great rate, going right through the catalogue of books without much regard to methodised study. In fact, we had to take what we could get and be thankful. Permitted to have only one volume at a time, we made up for short allowance by reading as quickly as possible, and, to save time, often read together from the same book; one having the privilege of turning over the leaves. Desultory as was this course of reading, it

undoubtedly widened the sphere of our ideas; and it would be ungrateful not to acknowledge that some of my own success, and not a few of the higher pleasures experienced in life, are due to Elder's library in the little old burgh.

My brother and I had another source of self-education when we were boys, on which it is agreeable to reflect. The schools we attended, as has been said, were devoid of maps, and no instruction whatsoever was given on physical geography. Nor did the parents of the pupils seem to make any complaint on the subject. By a fortunate circumstance Robert and I were able to make up for the deficiency. When I was about ten years of age, Mr Oman, an old and retired keeper of a boarding-school, died. He had, in his day, been a good teacher, with enlarged scientific views, and left no successor of a like quality in the town. At his decease, his effects were sold off by auction. Among other articles offered to public competition were a pair of school-globes, twelve inches in diameter, which my father was lucky in securing for the modest sum of five shillings.

I can remember the delight with which the globes were received in the family circle, and exhibited on a table for general admiration. Old and dingy in the colours, they had not the polished sprightly look of modern globes, but when cleaned and brushed up, no fault was found with them. We did not even care much about a severe injury that had been sustained by the terrestrial globe, consisting of a hole the size of a crown-piece in the middle of the Antarctic Ocean. There were, likewise, shortcomings on the score of recent discoveries. Of Australia, there were only a few fragmentary outlines, with large intervening spaces,

marked 'unknown country.' It was satisfactory, however, to see the track of Columbus in his discovery of America, and the routes respectively pursued by Anson and Cook in their memorable circumnavigations.

Robert and I flew with avidity on these poor old globes. By poring over them, we learned how to find out the latitude of places, to comprehend the signs of the zodiac and their relative positions, and to attain a correct idea of the ecliptic or great circle in the heavens, round which the sun seems to travel in the course of a year. From the celestial sphere, that had been less injured, we gained a knowledge of the constellations and situation of the principal fixed stars, of which, along with the planetary bodies, we had already received some information from my father in his observations with the telescope. Mostly engaged at school during the day, we occupied ourselves in a study of the two globes early in the morning, or in the evening when candles were lighted in the parlour. My mother was glad to see us interested in these recreations, instead of rambling idly about the street at night, and suggested that we should begin to fix the leading facts in geography and astronomy in our minds, by means of notes. The advice was taken. Having no money wherewith to buy paper, I was permitted to make a note-book from a number of blank leaves torn from an old ledger. To give the little book a decent exterior, I covered it with strips of marble paper pasted together, that Elder had pared off in his binding operations, and which he kindly allowed me to carry home. The note-book so formed was somewhat miscellaneous in contents, for we wrote down all sorts of useful facts that came in our way—an exercise in

composition, if nothing else, and which could scarcely fail to be beneficial in connection with the subsequent duties of life.

Passing from these reminiscences of boyish days, something may now be said of the circumstances which, in a strangely unexpected manner, sent my brother and myself adrift into the world that lay beyond our hitherto limited horizon.

The calm tenor of my father's affairs was at length abruptly ruffled. The introduction of the power-loom and other mechanical appliances had already begun to revolutionise the cotton trade. Down and down sank hand-loom weaving, till it was threatened with extinction, and ultimately the trade was followed only as a desperate necessity. Happy were those who gave it up in time, and betook themselves to something else. Moved by the declining aspect of his commission business, my father bethought himself of commencing as a draper. For this purpose, he alienated the small property in which my brother and I were born, and removed to a central part of the town. Here he began his new line of business, for which, excepting his obliging manners, he had no particular qualification. As, however, there was then little of that eager striving which is now conspicuous everywhere, matters would perhaps have gone on pretty well, but for one untoward circumstance, shortly to be mentioned.

At this period—1808 to 1812—the country at large was in the heat of the French war. My reminiscences bring up the picture of universal soldiering, marching to and fro of regiments, drums beating, colours flying, news of victories, and general illuminations. There was an active demand for recruits for the regular army,

and hardly less eagerness in procuring men to fill up the militia regiments. Of various regiments of this class stationed at Peebles I have some interesting recollections. The officers gave an intellectual fillip to the place. Some of them were good artists. Others brought with them books of a superior class, about which they conversed in the houses they visited. They received London newspapers, which were prized for their original and copious news of the war, also for comments on public affairs not to be found in the timid provincial press of that day. The militia officers were still more popular in making the natives acquainted with English outdoor sports, until then unknown. I first saw cricket played by officers of the Cambridgeshire militia on the green margin of the Tweed. Melodies, which few had heard of, were introduced at private evening parties. Some of these I listened to with ravished ears—one in particular, the charming air, *Cease your Funning*, which was exquisitely played on the octave flute by Carnaby, a young and accomplished officer in the Ross-shire militia. In wakeful nights, even at this long-distant time, I think of Carnaby and his flute.

The militia, as is well known, consisted of men drawn by ballot—a kind of modified conscription; for substitutes were accepted. By paying a small sum annually to an insurance club, a substitute was provided from the general fund. In the fiercest period of the war, the pressure for substitutes grew intense. The bounty to be dispensed for one was occasionally as large, if not larger than the bounty paid by government for enlisting into the army. On a particular occasion, I knew of fifty pounds being given for a substitute.

There were some interesting circumstances which impressed it on my recollection.

A substitute was in urgent demand. Advertisements were issued. Nobody would go. Thirty pounds were offered. Forty pounds were offered. At length the offer rose to fifty. A poor man of middle age presented himself. Sandy Noble, for such was the name of this true-hearted person, was by trade a cotton-weaver. He was a widower, with a grown-up family, but they had left him to pursue their own course in life; so he was in a sense alone in the world. The wages realised by his peculiar species of labour had materially declined, and he was now only able to make both ends meet. Not even that. He had become responsible for a number of petty debts, caused by the long and expensive illness of his lately deceased wife. These debts hung round his neck like a millstone. The thought of never being able to liquidate them was acutely distressing.

One day, as he sat on his loom, meditating on the state of his affairs, a neighbour came in to announce the intelligence that fifty pounds had just been offered for a substitute. Making no remark on this piece of news, Sandy, when alone, took a slate, and calculated that fifty pounds would clear him. His mind was instantly made up. For two days and a night he worked with desperation to finish the web he was engaged upon. Having executed his task, and settled with my father, his employer, he walked off to the secretary of the insurance club, and coming in the nick of time, was thankfully accepted as the required substitute. The militia authorities were in a fume at the delay, and a sergeant had been despatched to bring

the man who had been balloted for, otherwise he would be treated as a deserter. As the recognised substitute, Sandy, in a few quiet words, pacified the sergeant. 'Just gie me half an hour,' said he, 'and I'll be ready to gang wi' ye.' The half-hour was given, and devoted to a noble act of integrity, such as, we fear, is rarely presented in matters of this nature. With the fifty pounds in his pocket, Sandy went from one end of the town to the other, paying debt after debt as he went along—fifteen and sixpence to one, three pounds eleven and threepence to another, and so on, not leaving a single shilling undischarged. When all was over, he mounted a small bundle on the end of a stick, and, in a calm, self-satisfied mood, he trudged away with the sergeant to headquarters. The name of Sandy Noble deserves to go down in the roll of honour with many of greater distinction.

The war, as we see, with its innumerable horrors, was not all bad. It evoked endurance, courage, manliness, a disposition to make a sacrifice of even life itself for the public good. To take the obscure incident just recorded, there was a grandeur in the honesty and disinterestedness of Sandy Noble, that gives dignity to human nature. The very knowledge that there was such a true-hearted being in humble life is gratifying, though, no doubt, many similar cases could be mentioned.

As an out-of-the-way country town, Peebles had been selected by government as a place suitable for the residence of prisoners of war on parole, shortly after the recommencement of hostilities in 1803. Not more, however, than twenty or thirty of these exiles arrived at this early period. They were mostly Dutch and

Walloons, with afterwards a few Danes—unfortunate mariners seized on the coast of the Netherlands, and sent to spend their lives in an inland Scottish town. These men did not repine. They nearly all betook themselves to learn some handicraft, to eke out their scanty allowance. At leisure hours, they might be seen fishing in long leather boots, as if glad to procure a few trouts and eels, and at the same time satisfy the desire to dabble in the water. Two or three years later came a *détenu* of a different class. He was seemingly the captain of a ship from the French West Indies, who brought with him his wife and a negro servant-boy named Jack. Black Jack, as we called him, was sent to the school, where he played with the other boys on the town green, and at length read and spoke like a native. He was a good-natured creature, and became a general favourite. Jack was the first pure negro whom the boys at that time had ever seen.

None of these classes of prisoners broke his parole, nor ever gave any trouble to the authorities. They had not, indeed, any appearance of being prisoners, for they were practically free to live and ramble about, within reasonable bounds, where they liked. In 1810, there was a large accession to this original body of prisoners on parole, to whom I must specially refer.

Memory carries me back to a particular Sunday evening. Having gone through the day in a perfectly constitutional manner, the inhabitants of the town felt that, towards evening, they might, in a mild and quiet way, indulge in a little recreation—not amusement by any means, only a smell of the fresh air. All depended on slowness and quietness. Anything like laughing, whistling, singing, walking hurriedly, or boisterous behaviour, was

proscribed. You might do almost what you liked, provided it was done slowly and quietly, as if you were not doing it. The impropriety consisted in making a noise.

On Sunday evenings, from the proceedings of the day, everything was agreeably calmed down to an unchallengeable quietude. People who had gardens walked out quietly—if by back-doors so much the better—and with their hands in their pockets made their observations quietly on the growth of the cabbages and gooseberries. Others took a sauntering sort of walk quietly to the river, and in a manner not to provoke discussion, spoke of the prospects of fishing for the season; perhaps introducing a somewhat playful anecdote about catching a salmon, but always in a subdued tone of voice, and never venturing beyond a smile. Some took a fancy for going a little more afield, and leaning over gateways, made remarks quietly on the crops, and threw out speculations as to the probable price of meal and potatoes after next harvest. A number, otherwise bent, took a fancy for visiting the churchyard, where an hour was quietly and pleasantly spent in making observations on 'the poor inhabitant below,' in the respective newly made graves. To all this there may be fault-finders. As long as human nature is what it is, I can imagine nothing more decorous or reverential than these modest and leisurely Sunday evening musings.

My father had no garden to speak of. His tastes did not lie in that direction. At all odd hours he fastened on books, reviews, and newspapers. The only newspaper of which I have any familiar remembrance at this early period, was *The Edinburgh Star*. It was a twice-

a-week journal, and, as things went, had a good circulation. My father could not afford to subscribe for *The Star*. All he could do was to be a member of a club to take in the paper, which was handed about to one after the other, each member being allowed to have it in turn for a certain number of hours. Such, in the days of taxed and dear newspapers, was an almost universal practice, and in our community it was no way singular.

By some chance, which I am unable to explain, my father's tenure of the Friday's *Star* began on Sunday evening, at six o'clock, when the natives generally were out on their quietly sauntering perambulations. For three days he had heard nothing satisfactory of the war, and in his anxiety had watched the face of the alabaster timepiece on the wall of our little parlour, to see when the paper could with propriety be sent for. The hands on the dial having at length pointed to a quarter to six, I am requested to go for *The Star*. At the time, I am seated at a window trying to commit to memory that Scripture paraphrase of matchless beauty, which my mother prescribed to me as a study :

> 'Few are thy days, and full of woe,
> O man, of woman born.'

Laying the book aside, I obey the command to go for *The Star*, and, on the whole, being glad to get into the open air, I hurry off with a leather cap on my head, and a crisply plaited frill down my back, in quest of the paper. I knew all about the mission, for it was not the first time I had been so employed.

The person to whom I was sent was a respectable

candlemaker—his surname of no consequence. He was a short, stoutish man, who filled the office of Dean of Guild, which contributed to give him a certain dignified position in the town. Ordinarily, however, he was best known as 'Candle Andrew.' As a bachelor, though advanced in life, Andrew lived with his sister, who acted as housekeeper and shopwoman, and was usually, as already mentioned, called 'Candle Nell.' It was altogether a successful arrangement. The brother and sister made no sort of show. The business was conducted cheaply and quietly.

On the present occasion, being Sunday, the shop was shut, and entrance to the premises was by a side-door, the first on the right-hand in going down the close as you went to the candle-work. To that door I proceeded. It was opened by Nell, and I was ushered into the kitchen until she announced the object of my visit. All was quiet and decorous. I was invited to step into the room. Here sat Candle Andrew in his Sunday's best, with an under red-silk waistcoat, and his bald head lightly powdered. Before him, lay a large open folio volume of Matthew Henry's Bible, covering nearly the whole table. Above it, and just about the same size, lay *The Star*. Candle Andrew, whom I esteemed to be a great man, as Dean of Guild, with his powdered head and red under-waistcoat, was so kind as speak to me, and what he said (while folding up the newspaper) was momentous. 'Great news, Willie, my man—terrible battles in Spain—thousands o' French prisoners—a number o' them brought to Leith, and I shouldn't wonder if some were sent here. However, there's *The Star;* and please to give my compliments to your mother.' Little did I think that what Candle

Andrew had hinted at, was destined to shape the whole existence of my brother and myself, indeed the whole family, father and mother included.

Inspired by the notion that there was something important in the intelligence, I hastened home, but before I arrived, my father had received a glimmering of the news. A neighbour had called to say that there was to be immediately a great accession to the present French prisoners of war on parole. As many as a hundred and eleven were already on their way to the town, and might be expected in perhaps a day or two.

There was speedily a vast sensation in the place. The local militia had been disbanded. Lodgings of all sorts were vacant. The new arrivals would on all hands be heartily welcomed. On Tuesday, the expected French prisoners in an unceremonious way began to drop in. As one of several boys, I went out to meet these new prisoners of war on the road from Edinburgh. They came walking in twos and threes—a few of them lame. Their appearance was startling, for they were in military garb, in which they had been captured in Spain. Some were in light blue hussar dresses, braided, with marks of sabre-wounds. Others were in dark-blue uniform. Several wore large cocked-hats, but the greater number had undress caps. All had a gentlemanly air, notwithstanding their generally dishevelled attire, their soiled boots, and their visible marks of fatigue. Before night, they had all arrived; and through the activity of the agent appointed by the Transport Board, they had been provided with lodgings suitable to their slender allowance.

This large batch of prisoners on parole were, of course, all in the rank of naval or military officers. Some had been pretty high in the service, and seen a

good deal of fighting. Several were doctors, or, as they called themselves, *officiers de santé*. Among the whole there were, I think, about a dozen midshipmen. A strange thing was their varied nationality. Though spoken of as French, there was in the party a mixture of Italians, Swiss, and Poles; but this we found out only after some intercourse. Whatever their origin, they were warm adherents of Napoleon, whose glory at this time was at its height. Lively in manner, their minds were full of the recent struggles in the Peninsula.

Through the considerateness of an enterprising grocer, the prisoners were provided with a billiard-table, at which they spent much of their time. So far well. But how did these unfortunate exiles contrive to live—how did they manage to feed and clothe themselves, and pay for lodgings? Thereby hangs a tale, which we will by-and-by come to. The allowance from government was on a moderate scale. I doubt if it was more than a shilling a head per diem. In various instances two persons lived in a single room, but even that cost at least half-a-crown a week, which made a considerable inroad on revenue. The truth is, they must have been half-starved, but for the fortunate circumstance of a number of them having brought money—foreign gold pieces—concealed about their person, which stores were supplemented by remittances from France; and in a friendly way, at least as regards the daily mess, or *table d'hôte*, the richer helped the poorer, which was a good trait in their character. The messing together was the grand resource, and took place in a house hired for the purpose, in which the cookery was conducted under the auspices of M. Lavoche, one of the prisoners, who, as is not unusual with Frenchmen, was skilled in cuisine. My brother

and I had some dealings with Lavoche. We cultivated rabbits in a hutch built by ourselves in a back-yard, and sold them for the Frenchmen's mess ; the money got for them, usually eightpence a pair, being employed in the purchase of books.

Billiards were indispensable, but something more was wanted. Without a theatre, life was felt to be unendurable. But how was a theatre to be secured? There was nothing of the kind in the place. The more eager of the prisoners managed to get out of the difficulty. There was an old and disused ballroom. It was rather of confined dimensions, and low in the roof, with a gallery at one end, over the entrance, for the musicians. In the days of yore, however, what scenes of gaiety had it not witnessed! Walter Scott's mother, when a girl, I was told, had crossed Minchmoor, a dangerously high hill, in a chaise from the adjacent county, to dance for a night in that little old ballroom. Now set aside as unfashionable, the room was at anybody's service, and came quite handily to the Frenchmen. They fitted it with a stage at the inner end, and cross-benches to accommodate a hundred and twenty persons, independently of perhaps twenty more in the musicians' gallery. The thing was neatly got up, with scenery painted by M. Walther and M. Ragulski, the latter a young Pole with artistic tastes. No licence was required for the theatre, for it was altogether a private undertaking. Money was not taken at the door, and no tickets were sold. Admission was gained by complimentary billets, distributed chiefly among persons with whom the actors had established an intimacy.

Among these favoured individuals was my father, who,

carrying on a mercantile concern, occupied a prominent position. He felt a degree of compassion for these foreigners, constrained to live in exile, and besides welcoming them to his house, gave them credit in articles of drapery of which they stood in need; and through which circumstance they soon assumed an improved appearance in costume. Introduced to the family circle, their society was agreeable and in a sense instructive. Though with imperfect speech, a sort of half-French, half-English, they related interesting circumstances in their career. Robert and I, desperately keen to learn, but with poor opportunities of doing so, listened with greedy ears to the discourse of the Frenchmen, which had the double advantage of increasing our stock of facts and improving us in the knowledge of the French tongue.

How performances in French should have had any general attraction may seem to require explanation. There had grown up in the town, among young persons especially, a knowledge of familiar French phrases; so that what was said, accompanied with appropriate gestures, was pretty well guessed at. But, as greatly contributing to remove difficulties, a worthy man of an obliging turn, and genial humour, volunteered to act as interpreter. Moving in humble circumstances as a hand-loom weaver, he had let lodgings to the French captain and his wife, and from being for years in domestic intercourse with them, he became well acquainted with their language. William Hunter—for such was his name—besides being of ready wit, partook of a lively musical genius. I have heard him sing *Malbrouk s'en va-t-en guerre*, with amazing correctness and vivacity. His services at the theatre were

therefore of value to the natives in attendance. Seated conspicuously at the centre of what we may call the pit, eyes were turned to him inquiringly when anything particularly funny was said that needed explanation, and for general use, he whisperingly communicated the requisite interpretation. So put up to the joke, the natives heartily joined in the laugh, though rather tardily. Dear old William Hunter, with his ready demonstrations of Scottish humour, how my brother and I in later years regretted his loss! As for the French plays, which were performed with perfect propriety, they were to us not only amusing but educational. Life, to be worth anything, is made up of happy recollections. The remembrance of these dramatic efforts of the French prisoners of war has been through life a continual treat. It is curious for me to look back on the performance of pieces of Molière, in circumstances so very remarkable.

My mother, even while lending her dresses and caps to enable performers to represent female characters, never liked the extraordinary intimacy which had been formed between the French officers and my father. Against his giving them credit, she constantly remonstrated in vain. It was a tempting but perilous trade. For a time, by the resources just mentioned, they paid wonderfully well. With such solid inducements, my father confidingly gave extensive credit to these strangers—men who, by their position, were not amenable to the civil law, and whose obligations, accordingly, were altogether debts of honour. The consequence was what might have been anticipated. An order suddenly arrived from the government, commanding the whole of the prisoners to quit Peebles, and march chiefly to Sanquhar in Dumfriesshire; the cause of the movement being the prospective arrival of a

militia regiment. The intelligence came one Sunday afternoon. What a gloom prevailed at several firesides that fatal evening!

On their departure, the French prisoners made many fervid promises that, should they ever return to their own country, they would have pleasure in discharging their debts. They all got home at the peace in 1814, but not one of them ever paid a farthing. A list of their names, debts, and official position in the army of Napoleon, remains as a curiosity in my possession. It is not unlikely that a number of these returned exiles found a grave on the field of Waterloo. Whatever became of them, there was soon a crisis in my father's affairs. The pressure might have been got over, for with patience there were means to satisfy all demands; but the possibility of rectifying affairs was defeated by weakly taking the advice of an interested party, a relative of my mother, who recommended a sequestration. The result was that the sage adviser, as trustee, managed everything so adroitly for his own benefit, that the creditors received but a small dividend, and the family lost almost everything. It is hateful to refer to this piece of folly and villainy, because it reminds me of poignant distresses; but it is necessary to give it some degree of prominence, for it forms the pivot on which the present narrative turns.

By various shifts, the family continued to struggle on for a year or two in Peebles after this catastrophe. The penury which was endured was less painful than the acute sense of social degradation. My mother looked for some sympathy and assistance from her brother, and also from other relatives at a distance, but without avail. Feeling, with a too keen susceptibility, that he had lost

caste, my father never quite held up his head after this event; yet, deplored at the time, it really proved a fortunate circumstance. Like a wholesome though unpleasant storm in a stagnating atmosphere, it cleared the way for a new and better order of things. A seemingly great misfortune ultimately proved to be no misfortune at all; it was, in fact, a blessing, for which my brother and I, as well as other members of the family, could not be sufficiently thankful.

The wise resolution was adopted of quitting Peebles. My mother, animated by keen anxiety and foresight, was particularly solicitous to remove, with a view to procure means of advancement for her sons. Accordingly, impelled alike by necessity and inclination, the family removed to Edinburgh; Robert being alone left to pursue his education for a short time longer. Crowded into the *Fly*, then the only engine of public conveyance to the Scottish capital, we crossed the Kingside-Edge, as a high ridge of land is called, on a bleak day in December 1813—my mother with an infant daughter on her knee, and a heart full of mingled hopes and fears of the future. It was a five hours' journey, of which one entire hour was spent at Venturefair to rest the horses. Here the party were hospitably entertained with warm kail by Jenny Wilson, who kept the small inn along with her brother William. So reinvigorated, we drove on in somewhat better spirits, entering Edinburgh by the Causewayside—my mother with but a few shillings in her pocket; there was not a halfpenny in mine.

OLD EDINBURGH.

CHAPTER III.

SETTLING IN EDINBURGH—1813–1814.

FAMILIES falling by misfortune into straitened circumstances, of course lose many old friends and acquaintances, at least as far as familiar personal intercourse is concerned. This loss, though often the subject of sorrowful and angry remark, is not an unmitigated evil. Sympathy is doubtless due throughout all perplexing social distinctions; gracious are the acts of a true friend; kindness to the unfortunate will ever command approbation; but let us not forget that it is better for personal intimacies to suffer some modification, than for the impoverished to lose self-respect and become dependent on a system of habitual condescension. It seems hard to take this view of the matter, but I fear that on no other basis can the indigent aspire to be the associates of the affluent. Could matters be seen rightly, they would appear to be as well ordered in this as in other things which concern our welfare.

Happily, the defection, real or apparent, of old friends is not uncompensated. Sinking into a lower sphere, a new and hitherto undiscovered region is disclosed. A higher class, as we are apt to feel, has cruelly turned

its back on us; but we are received with open arms by a very good and agreeable sort of people, in whose moderate incomes, and, it may be, misfortunes and struggles, we feel the pleasures of fellowship. The Vicar of Wakefield, it will be recollected, did not find the jail such a bad thing after all.

My parents, on settling in Edinburgh, may be presumed to have found consolations of this nature. According to immemorial usage, families with limited means from the southern counties of Scotland, who seek a home in the capital, sagaciously pitch on one of the second-rate streets in the southern suburbs. There, sprinkled about in common stairs, they form a kind of colony, possessing a community of south-country recollections and gossip.

Following the established rule, our first home was a floor entering from a common stair in West Nicolson Street. Beneath us, level with the ground, resided a poor widow, who drew a scanty living from a small huxtery concern. Immediately above us dwelt the widow of a Roxburghshire clergyman, a motherly person, with two grown-up daughters. Over this respectable family, and highest of all, was a tailor, who, working in the window-sole of his apartment, had the reputation of doing things cheaply. On a level with us, next tenement, but entering by a different stair, was a family of some distinction, consisting of the two ladies, Miss Betty and Miss Ailie Hay, already spoken of by my brother. The kitchen fireplaces of both dwellings being back to back, with a thin and imperfect wall between, the servant-girls of the two families, both exiles from Tweedside, were able to carry on comforting conversations by removing a brick at pleasure in the chimney; through which

irregular channel much varied intelligence from Peeblesshire was interchanged between the two families. Here we lived till Whitsunday 1814, when we removed to a floor of a like quality in Hamilton's Entry, Bristo Street —the back windows of the house overlooking the small court in which was situated a little old building that had been Walter Scott's first school in Edinburgh—since removed in the course of city improvements.

If anything, the families hereabout were more hard-up, and, to be plain, we were more hard-up too. Our dwelling was on the second floor of the stair, and on the flat immediately beneath resided Ebenezer Picken, a scholarly gentleman in reduced circumstances, who, after trying various shifts to secure a living for himself and family, now professed to teach languages, and endeavoured to sell by subscription one or two volumes of poems, which, I fear, did not do much for him. He died in 1816. His son, Andrew, who was also a poetic genius, and about my own age, became affected with the mania concerning Poyais, and emigrated with a number of others to that pestilential marsh, where most of the settlers died shortly after landing—Andrew kindly acting as chaplain, with a shirt for surplice, and reading the funeral service. From a fellow-feeling in circumstances, we formed an intimacy with our neighbours the Pickens, while residing in the same tenement; and the friendship was extended over a series of years, until the remaining members of the family went to America.

As regards ways and means. On coming to Edinburgh, my father had resumed his commission business from Glasgow cotton-manufacturers, but this trade had long been declining, and was but a meagre dependence. To aggravate his difficulties, he was not qualified by

knowledge of the world to deal with the class of workmen to whom he furnished employment. Some of them were decent enough old sinewy men, sufficiently trustworthy; but others, accustomed to go on the tramp, used artifices that baffled his ingenuity. Carrying on their handicraft in obscure recesses in Fountainbridge, St Ann's Yards, the Back of the Canongate, or Abbey Hill, it was sometimes as difficult to trace them out as to get any right clue to their manœuvres. It was by no means unusual to find that the materials intrusted to them were dishonestly pawned, and that sums of money advanced for half-done work on piteous appeals of distress were irrecoverable. In short, my father was much too soft for this kind of business; and the result was what might have been expected. With resources on the verge of exhaustion, there ensued privations against which it required no small degree of composure to bear up. The old German flute, preserved as a precious relic throughout the recent disasters of the family, was sometimes resorted to as a solace, although the favourite airs, such as *Corn Rigs*, did not sound half so sweetly, it was thought, in the dingy atmosphere of Hamilton's Entry, as they had done along the Eddleston Water.

The Dark Ages, as we have since jestingly called them, had begun, and for a number of successive years an acquaintance was contracted with families and individuals, who, if not experiencing a similar depression, occupied an unpretending position in society. I can recollect some of them, and also the shifty schemes to which they were less or more impelled, by the necessities of their situation. Widows of decayed tradesmen, who were moving heaven and earth to get their sons into

hospitals, and their daughters taught to be governesses. Teachers in the decline of life, like poor Picken, endeavouring to draw a subsistence from the fees of most-difficult-to-be-procured pupils. Licensed preachers to whom fate had not assigned a kirk, and who, after years of pining, now made a livelihood by preparing young men for university degrees. Genteel unmarried women, left destitute by improvident fathers, who contrived to maintain themselves by colouring maps, or by sewing fine needle-work for the Repository—a benevolent and useful institution, to which be all praise. Why continue the catalogue?

There was some use in knowing, and being known to, these kinds of people. I speak not of the value to myself, as having an opportunity of studying some of the humbler and more characteristic phases of society. To my father and mother, these persons, with their varied experience, could furnish hints as to how petty difficulties incidental to their condition might be overcome. One or two things they seem to have made their special study. They knew the proper methods of applying for situations in public offices, and what expedients could be attempted to elude the payment of rates and taxes. For the most part, they entertained a high respect for, and duly stood in awe of, magistrates, ministers, and great men generally; for it was only through such distinguished authorities that certificates of character and help in various ways could be obtained in cases of emergency. Far be it from me to impute dishonesty to these ingeniously struggling and scheming classes. On the whole, in the darkest of their days, so far as I knew, they maintained a wonderful determination to keep square with the world. It must be

admitted, however, that the classes to which I allude too frequently entertained loose notions concerning taxes. Demands of this nature seemed to be little better than asking money for nothing. Rates and taxes might be right in the abstract; that they did not question. But the collector who came periodically to your door with a portentous pocket-book, and made point-blank demands for sums of money—such as fifteen shillings and ninepence halfpenny, or one pound eleven and threepence—which it was exceedingly inconvenient to pay, was clearly a nuisance; and with no stretch of conscience, he might be coaxed, wheedled, put off, and told to call again as long as it was safe to do so.

In the midst of the straits to which these remarks refer, my father, through congeniality of taste, made the acquaintance of several persons possessed of musical and poetical acquirements. One of these was Mr John Hamilton, author of the song, *Up in the Morning Early*, who, drawing to the conclusion of his days, lived in a stair at the south end of Lothian Street, and in good weather might be seen creeping feebly along the walks in the Meadows, deriving pleasure from the sunshine, to which he was soon to bid adieu. Another was Mr William Clarke, noted for his musical genius, who acted as organist of the Episcopal Chapel in the Cowgate, the services of which place of public worship were at that time conducted by the Rev. Archibald Alison, author of the *Essay on Taste*, and *Sermons on the Seasons*, and whose son was the late Sir Archibald Alison, author of the *History of Europe*. As music was my father's overwhelming passion, his introduction to the church-organ under the auspices of Clarke was a matter of extreme exultation. Entranced

with the performances of the organ and choir, he became a frequent attender on the ministrations of Mr Alison, whose persuasive piety, refined sentiments, and elegant diction, possessed, as is well known, an indescribable charm.

Charged more especially with family cares, my mother had other considerations than church-music. What was to be done with me, was a primary concern. I was in my fourteenth year. Further schooling was out of the question. Robert might go on with his education as long as seemed expedient, but it was time I should get to work. What would I be? My tastes lay in the direction of books; any department would do. A friend put on the scent, reported that on inquiry at a leading member of the profession, book-selling was a poor business; at best, it was very precarious, and could not be recommended. Not discouraged, I still thought my vocation lay towards literature in some shape or other.

Since our arrival in town, I had read all that could be read for nothing at the booksellers' windows, and at the stalls which were stuck about the College and High School Wynds. I had also become a great frequenter of the evening book-auctions. The principal were Carfrae's in Drummond Street, and that of Peter Cairns in the Agency Office, opposite the University. At present, book-auctions are only during the day; then, they took place in the evening, and were a favourite resort. The sales were indicated by a lantern, with panes of white calico, at the door, on which was inscribed 'Auction of Books.' My attendance, punctual on the hanging out of the lantern, was a new and delightful recreation. The facetiæ of the

auctioneers, their observations on books and authors, and the competitions in the biddings, were all interesting to a lad fresh from the country. Carfrae's was the more genteel and dignified, Cairns' was the more amusing of these lounges, wherefore it suited best for those who went for fun, and not for buying, on which account it chiefly secured my patronage.

Peter was a dry humorist, somewhat saturnine from business misadventures. Professedly, he was a bookseller in South College Street, and exhibited over his door a huge sham copy of Virgil by way of sign. His chief trade, however, was the auctioning of books and stationery at the Agency Office; a place with a strong smell of new furniture, amidst which it was necessary to pass before arriving at the saloon in the rear where the auctions were habitually held. Warm, well lighted, and comfortably fitted up with seats within a railed enclosure environing the books to be disposed of, this place of evening resort was as good as a reading-room. It was, indeed, rather better, for there was a constant fund of amusement in Peter's caustic jocularities—as when he begged to remind his audience that this was a place for selling, not for reading books—sarcasms which always provoked a round of ironical applause. His favourite author was Goldsmith, an edition of whose works he had published, which pretty frequently figured in his catalogue. On coming to these works, he always referred to them with profound respect — as, for example: 'The next in the catalogue, gentlemen, is the works of Oliver *Gooldsmith*, the greatest writer that ever lived, except Shakspeare; what do you say for it?—I 'll put it up at ten shillings.' Some one would perhaps audaciously bid twopence, which threw him

into a rage, and he would indignantly call out: 'Tippence, man; keep that for the *brode*,' meaning the plate at the church-door. If the same person dared to repeat the insult with regard to some other work, Peter would say: 'Dear me, has that poor man not yet got quit of his tippence?' which turned the laugh, and effectually silenced him all the rest of the evening. Peter's temper was apt to get ruffled when biddings temporarily ceased. He then declared that he might as well try to auction books in the poor-house. On such occasions, driven to desperation, he would try the audience with a bunch of quills, a dozen black-lead pencils, or a 'quare' of Bath-post, vengefully knocking which down at the price bidden for them, he would shout to 'Wully,' the clerk, to look after the money. Never minding Peter's querulous observations further than to join in the general laugh, I, like a number of other penniless youths, got some good snatches of reading at the auctions in the Agency Office. I there saw and handled books which I had never before heard of, and in this manner obtained a kind of notion of bibliography. My brother, who, like myself, became a frequenter of the Agency Office, relished Peter highly, and has touched him off in one of his essays.

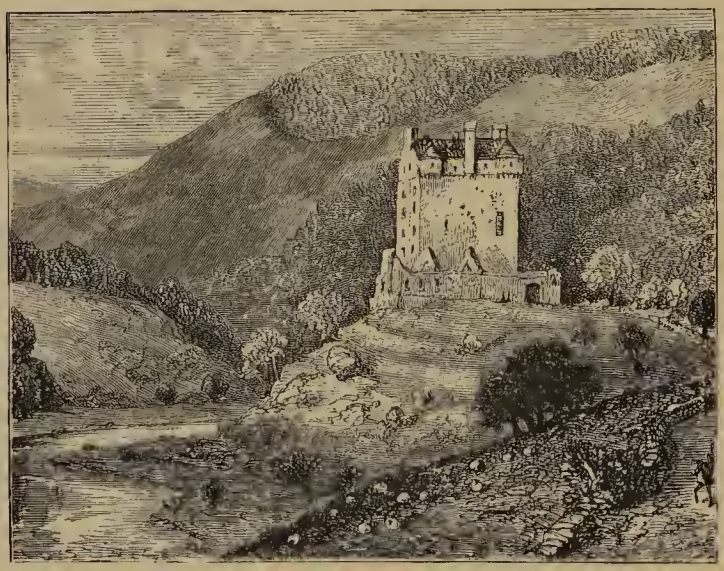
Inquiries for the situation of apprentice in a book-seller's shop not proving successful, and time wearing on, I relinquished my preconceived fancies, and stated that I should be glad to be put to any line of business whatever. No sooner had this been concluded on than an opening seemed to cast up in a grocer's shop situated in the Tolbooth Wynd, Leith. Unfortunately, Leith was two miles distant, but it was announced that the grocer munificently imparted board and lodging to

his apprentices, and that, in present circumstances, was of some importance. It was resolved I should look after the place. Accordingly, I one day went off to Leith, trudging down from Edinburgh towards the Tolbooth Wynd, not greatly elated with the prospect before me, but determined not to be nice in accepting terms. A friend of the family, resident in Leith, was to introduce me.

On reaching the spot with him, nearly opposite the public fountain, I paused a moment outside to reconnoitre the grocer's premises, before proceeding. The windows exhibited quantities of raw sugar in different varieties of brownness, hovering over which were swarms of flies, in a state of frantic enjoyment. Sticks of black liquorice leaned coaxingly on the second row of panes, flanked by tall glass jars of sweeties and peppermint drops; behind these outward attractions, there were observable yellow-painted barrels of whisky, rows of bottles of porter, piles of cheeses of varied complexions, firkins of salt butter, and boxes of soap. At the counter were a number of women and children buying articles, such as quarter-ounces of tea and ounces of sugar; and the floor was battered with dirt and débris.

I was not much pleased with the look of the place, but I had no choice. Entering, somewhat timidly, with my conductor, I was described as the boy who had been recommended as an apprentice, and was ushered into the back-room to be examined as to my capabilities. It was immediately seen that I was physically incompetent to fill the situation. The chief qualification in demand was muscular vigour. The boy wanted would have to draw a truck loaded with several hundredweights of goods, to be delivered to customers, it might be miles

distant. Instead of an apprentice, it was in reality a horse that might have been advertised for, or at the least an able-bodied porter. I was at once pronounced to be unfit for this enviable post—a much too delicately made youth—a day's work with the barrow or the bottle-basket would finish me—I had better abandon the idea of being a grocer. With these remarks pronounced for doom, I retired, not a little downcast at the unfortunate issue of the expedition, and sorrowfully returned up the Walk to Edinburgh.



NEIDPATH CASTLE.

CHAPTER IV.

MY APPRENTICESHIP—1814 TO 1819.

HOW little are we able to penetrate the future! The journey to Leith was not thrown away. In returning homewards, I had occasion to pass the shop of Mr John Sutherland, bookseller, Calton Street, an establishment opposite the Black Bull Hotel, the starting-place of the mail-coaches for London. In the window was the announcement, 'An Apprentice Wanted.' Here was the right thing at last. I did not lose time in communicating this piece of intelligence.

Having in the first place narrated the failure of the Leith affair, I proceeded to describe the discovery I had made in Calton Street. There was forthwith a family cogitation on the subject, and it was resolved that next day I should accompany my mother on a tour of investigation into the nature of the place. Next morning, accordingly, after being brushed up for the occasion, I set out for Sutherland's. Our reception was gratifyingly polite. The bookseller expressed himself satisfied with my appearance and the extent of my education. He said that in all respects I should be perfectly qualified for the situation. My principal duties

for two or three years would be very easy. I should only have to light the fire, take off and put on the shutters, clean and prepare the oil-lamps, sweep and dust the shop, and go all the errands. When I had nothing else to do, I was to stand behind the counter, and help in any way that was wanted; and talking of that, it would be quite contrary to rule for me ever to sit down, or to put off time reading.

In laying down the law, Sutherland admitted that at first the duties, though no way burdensome, might not perhaps be very pleasant, but the routine was sanctioned by immemorial usage. Constable and all the other great booksellers had begun in this way. Every one who aspired to take a front rank in the profession, must begin by being a junior apprentice. The period of service was five years at four shillings a week; not high pay, to be sure, but it was according to universal rule, from which he could see no departure.

My mother, who conducted the negotiation, found no fault with the proposed duties and terms; still she had her misgivings, and ventured to remark that her son was surely wrong in wishing to follow the business. 'We may manage,' she said, 'to get him through his apprenticeship, but I have serious fears of what is to follow. We cannot set him up in business, and how' (looking around) 'can he ever be able to get a stock of books like that?'

The bookseller endeavoured to allay her apprehensions, and his remarks are worth repeating: 'There is no fear of any one getting forward in the world, if he be only steady, obliging, attentive to his duties, and exercise a reasonable degree of patience. I can assure you, when I was the age of your son, I had as poor

prospects as any one; yet, I have so far got on tolerably well. In the outset of life, it is needless to look too far in advance. We must just do the best we can in the meantime, and hope that all will turn out rightly in the end.' These sensible observations left nothing further to be said. The bargain was struck. I was to come next Monday morning to be initiated by an elder apprentice. And so, on the 8th of May 1814, I was launched into the business world.

In August the following year, the family quitted Edinburgh. In his desperation, my father accepted the situation of commercial manager of a salt manufactory, called Joppa Pans, a smoky odorous place, consisting of a group of sooty buildings, situated on the sea-shore half-way between Portobello and Musselburgh; and thither, to a small dwelling amidst the steaming salt-pans, they all removed except myself. Robert, who had now come from Peebles, and been some time at an academy in Edinburgh, accompanied them; the arrangement being that he should walk to and from town daily. I was left to pursue my business, being for this purpose consigned to a lodging that may merit some notice.

Until this disruption, I had no occasion to rely on myself. Now matters were changed. I was to have an opportunity of learning practically how far my weekly earnings would go in defraying the cost of board and lodging. In short, at little above fifteen years of age, I was thrown on my own resources. From necessity, not less than from choice, I resolved at all hazards to make the weekly four shillings serve for everything. I cannot remember entertaining the slightest despondency on the subject. But what may not any one with the

buoyancy of youth dare to encounter? Inspired by my mother's advices, animated by her noble example of uncomplaining meekness, all difficulties were overlooked.

As favourable for carrying out my aims at an independent style of living, I had the good-fortune to be installed in the dwelling of a remarkably precise and honest widow, a Peebles woman, who, with two grown-up sons, occupied the top story of a building in the West Port. My landlady had the reputation of being excessively parsimonious, but as her honesty was of importance to one in my position, and as she consented to let me have a bed, cook for me, and allow me to sit by her fireside—the fire, by the way, not being much to speak of—for the reasonable charge of eighteen-pence a week, I was thought to be lucky in finding her disposed to receive me within her establishment. To her dwelling, therefore, I repaired with my all, consisting of a few articles of clothing and two or three books, including a pocket Bible—the whole contained in a small blue-painted box, which I carried on my shoulder along the Grassmarket.

This abode, the uppermost floor in Boak's Land, was more elevated than airy. The back of the tall edifice overhung a tannery and a wild confusion of mean enclosures, with an outlook beyond to the castle, perched on its dark precipitous rock. The thoroughfare in front was then, as it is still, one of the most crowded and wretched in the city. The apartment assigned to me was a bed-closet, with a narrow window fronting the street. Yet this den was not all my own. For a time, it was shared with a student of divinity, a youth of my own age from the hills of Tweeddale; and afterwards with my brother Robert, when it was found

inexpedient for him to live in the country, and go to and from town daily.

Being all of us from Peeblesshire, there was much to speak of in common, though with no great cordiality of intercourse. In the evenings, when mason and carpenter lads dropped in, the conversation turned chiefly on sermons. Each visitor brought with him experiences as to how texts had been handled on the preceding Sunday; on which there ensued discussions singularly characteristic of a well-known phase in the Scotch mind.

'Weel, Tammie,' inquired the widow one evening at Tammie Tod, a journeyman mason lately arrived from the country, 'what was the doctor on last Sabbath afternoon?'

'He was on the Song'—meaning the Song of Solomon.

'Eh, the Song! that would be grand. He's a wonderfu' man the doctor: and what was his text?'

'It was a real fine text,' said Tammie, 'the deepest ever I heard—"For my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night;" fifth chapter, second verse, the second clause of the verse.'

'I ken that text weel,' responded the widow. 'I heard a capital discourse on it thirty years syne; but how did the doctor lay it out?'

'He divided it into five heads, ending with an application, which it would be weel for us a' to tak' to heart.'

And so Tammie, who had a proficiency in dissecting and criticising sermons, proceeded to describe with logical precision the manner in which his minister had handled the very intricate subject; his definitions being listened to and commented on with extraordinary relish.

Let no one hastily conclude that there was anything to ridicule in these searching, though perhaps too

speculative and familiar disquisitions; for apart from any religious consideration, they bore evidence of that spirit of inquiry and love of reasoning on momentous topics which may be said to have made Scotland what it is. I may not have been the better, but was by no means the worse, for hearing Tammie Tod's sermon experiences in that little upper floor in the West Port, and have often compared what there came under my observation with the unideaed sotting and want of all mental culture which unhappily mark certain departments of the population in different parts of the United Kingdom.

On market-days, my landlady was usually visited about dinner-time by some horny-fisted old acquaintance from about Leithen or Gala Water, with a shepherd's plaid around his shoulders; and who, after being treated to a share of the bannocks and kail, would finish off with a blast on the widow's tobacco-pipe; for, with all her saving habits, our worthy hostess indulged—moderately, I must say—in this luxury. The conversation of these worthies ran still on controversial divinity. They talked of the *Hind Let Loose*, Boston's *Marrow*, the *Crook in the Lot*, and the *Fourfold State* —standard topics among the class to which they belonged; and if I did not quite apprehend or was not improved by the discussions, they at least afforded an amusing study of character.

The charge made for my accommodation in these quarters left some scope for financiering as regards the remaining part of my wages. It was a keen struggle, but, like Franklin, whose autobiography I had read with avidity, I faced it with all proper resolution. My contrivances to make both ends meet were in some

degree amusing. As a final achievement in the art of cheap living, I was able to make an outlay of a shilling and ninepence suffice for the week. Below that I could not well go. Reaching this point, I had ninepence over for miscellaneous demands, chiefly in the department of shoes, which constituted an awkwardly heavy item. On no occasion did I look to parents for the slightest pecuniary subsidy.

If any one is so complimentary as to think that I had some merit in devising how to live on so low a figure as a shilling and ninepence a week, he may be disposed to modify his surprise on my stating that the expenditure did not include Sunday, on which day I was at home; so that, after all, the one-and-ninepence weekly inferred as much as threepence-halfpenny a day. How it was practicable to subsist on a sum apparently so diminutive, is only to be explained by two things—a resolute abstinence from all articles of luxury, and a union for eating purposes among the different members in the establishment. On tea, coffee, sugar, and some other articles of ordinary consumption, not a farthing was expended. I did not even attempt to buy new milk. My landlady had her own notions regarding food. As some consolation for plainness of fare, she declared, that 'eating is just a use,' meaning that you may accustom yourself to, and be satisfied with, anything. She thought it wasteful and ridiculous to consult the palate. It came all to the same thing, after the food got through the mouth. An excellent philosophy this for those who, like myself, had to consult the spending capacity of threepence-halfpenny on daily subsistence.

The practice of the little woman was as admirable as

her reasoning. She was the general caterer, an office to which she did great justice. The principal reliance was on oatmeal, of which, at the cheapest shops, she bought for each lodger a peck at a time. With a row of bags ranged on the table, she drew a handful from each corresponding to the quantity of porridge required; so that every one got his due. For her own share, she had that amount of the mess which adhered to the inside of the pot. The only liquid relish taken with the porridge was butter-milk, purchased in large quantities from farmers' carts weekly, and divided with the same scrupulous accuracy. Sometimes the fluid became more acrid than was at all pleasant, but this was partly remedied by a process of beating up, which had a modifying effect that would require some chemistry to explain. Good or bad, the choice lay betwixt it and nothing. Such was the staple—porridge with this species of milk, for breakfast and supper. As for dinner, a single pound of meat boiled in an immense quantity of water, with a profusion of barley and vegetables, and allocated according to pecuniary contribution, answered the purpose, along with a piece of bread. There was the whole affair. My daily expenditure, like that of most of the lodgers, stood thus:

Breakfast—porridge, three farthings; butter-milk, one farthing	£0	0	1
Dinner—broth, three farthings; bread, three farthings	0	0	1½
Supper, same as breakfast	0	0	1
	£0	0	3½

Our landlady had a high opinion of the filling qualities of broth, usually spoken of as *kail*, and only at odd times prepared a dinner for us of salt fish, or something equally cheap. That the dietetic arrangements

occasionally failed to avert the sensation of a certain internal vacuum, I may not deny. Sometimes, in the course of my long walks, I acknowledge to having felt a little hungry, and perhaps also to having looked too wistfully at the contents of the bakers' windows. But on the whole, I suffered no injury to health, and made the best of circumstances which, by involving the inventive faculty, kept the mind wholesomely on the alert. It is something to have practically realised the pleasures and advantages of the temperance so highly recommended by the famed Louis Cornaro.

Was there none, all this time, to lend a helping-hand to the struggling bookseller's apprentice? I did not put any one to the test. My mother had some relations in town moving in respectable circles; but I felt disinclined to court their intimacy. Admitting that I may in this respect have acted with unreasonable shyness, I am inclined to think that the policy of keeping aloof was the most advantageous in the end. Isolation was equivalent to independence of thought and action. Contact with the relatives I speak of would have been subjection.

High principle, however, hardly entered into my calculations. Pursuing my course from a resolute feeling of self-reliance, I just went on without troubling myself about anybody; trusting that things somehow would come right in the long-run. I should say, from my own observation, that young persons often chafe unnecessarily at being neglected by those whom they imagine should take notice of them. On the contrary, as a general rule, they ought to be thankful for being let alone, with a clear stage whereon they can act their part, alike unencumbered with advice or disheartened

by adverse criticism. To be always pining to be noticed, brought forward, taken by the hand, and done for, is anything but wise or manly. There are, doubtless, instances where the deserving are entitled to such assistance as can be safely or conveniently extended towards them. But in too many cases the visionary expectation of aid paralyses exertion, and consumes valuable time that might very properly be devoted to individual effort. At anyrate, I do not doubt that I should have suffered injury at this critical period, by getting entangled with fine people, invited to fine houses, and led to mix in fine evening-parties. Proceedings of that seductive kind would have been distinctly at variance with my condition. What was I but one of a thousand nameless lads, whom in passing no one knew or cared for? Shrouded by insignificance, I could fortunately, like others in a similar situation, work my way on in silence and obscurity, without any provocation to false shame, which almost more than anything else is the stumbling-block of youth. The very circumstance of my having come from the country, and of being little known to young men of my own standing, was a point in my favour.

It nevertheless, I own, required some fortitude to bear up against the hardships incidental to my situation as a junior apprentice, literally the slave of the lamp, and the drudge of the establishment. Though not beaten and dragooned as I had been at school, it was my destiny to experience no very gentle treatment. My employer, a stern disciplinarian, took the work out of his apprentices. He seemed to have no regard for the number of miles he caused them to walk in a day in the way of business. In addition to his trade as a

bookseller, he kept a circulating library, and also acted as an agent for the State Lottery. Independently, therefore, of a multitude of errands with parcels of books and stationery, I was charged with the delivery of vast quantities of circular letters eulogising the successive lotteries, which, in reason, ought to have been despatched through the post-office. Frequently I was sent on my travels with as many as three hundred letters, sorted and tied in bundles in the manner of a postman; and as my circuit took me up dozens of long stairs over miles of thoroughfares, I had an opportunity of acquiring a knowledge of the town and the names of its inhabitants.

In all this I was inconsiderately treated, and can never cease to think so. But there was something likewise to be thankful for. Sutherland enforced habits of punctuality and order, which happily stuck to me through life, along with a due appreciation of such morsels of time as can be spared from ordinary pursuits. My apprenticeship, like that of many others, was my drill; a harsh drill, no doubt, but it is difficult to see how, without some kind of vigorous training, youth is to grow into manhood with a proper conception of a number of common-place but important obligations. Certainly, old injunctions say as much.

My heaviest grievance was the delivery of those odious piles of lottery circulars, a species of labour that in no shape advanced my professional knowledge. To what hand, however, could I turn to rid myself of this slavery? The choice lay between suffering and ruin. It was my safest course to submit. Over the doorway of an old house in the West Bow, which I passed

several times daily, was the inscription carved in stone,

'HE THAT THOLES OVERCOMES.'

I made up my mind to *thole*—a pithy old Scottish word signifying to bear with patience; the whole inscription reminding us of a sentiment in Virgil: 'Whatever may happen, every kind of fortune is to be overcome by bearing it.'*

After all, the drudgery I had in connection with the lotteries is not utterly to be condemned. It afforded an amusing insight into the weaknesses of human nature. I could scarcely have learned what I did by sitting with composure in the lap of ease and luxury. As regards the state lottery, it is interesting for me to remember that I was once a humble minister in that gigantic national concern. And what a queer, struggling, whimsical set of people came under notice! Some would buy only odd numbers of five figures, such as 17,359; some eagerly sought for numbers which they had dreamt of being prizes, and would have no other; some brought children to select a number from the quantity offered—a degree of weakness which was outdone by those who superstitiously brought the seventh son of a seventh son to make the selection for them; some, more whimsical still, would only purchase at the last moment what everybody else had rejected. Few were so extravagant as to buy whole tickets, or even halves, quarters, or eighths. The great majority contented themselves with a sixteenth, the price of which was usually about a guinea and a half; and as the fortunate holder of the sixteenth of a twenty-thousand-pound

* 'Quidquid erit, superanda omnis fortuna ferendo est.'—*Æneid*, v.

prize would realise above twelve hundred pounds, the temptation to this species of gambling was enormous.

It would be an error to imagine that the dispersion of those myriads of lottery circulars in the obscurest quarters had no practical efficacy. The chief buyers of sixteenths were persons connected with the markets, hackney-coachmen, waiters at hotels, female housekeepers, small tradesmen, and those of limited means generally, who hoped to become rich by a happy turn of the wheel. Inmates of the Sanctuary of Holyrood and the debtors' prisons were numbered among the steady customers of the state lottery. Both, therefore, as a messenger with lottery intelligence, and as an errand-boy with parcels of books, I had frequent occasion to visit and become less or more acquainted with these places.

The Sanctuary, which embraced a cluster of decayed buildings in front and on both sides of Holyrood Palace, was at that time more resorted to by refugee debtors than it is in this improved age. It was seldom without distinguished characters from England—some of them gaunt, oldish gentlemen, seemingly broken-down men of fashion, wearing big gold spectacles, who now drew out existence here in defiance of creditors. To this august class of persons, who stood in need of supplies of books from the circulating library, I paid frequent visits; and conscious, perhaps, that they gave me some extra trouble, they were so considerate as to present me with an occasional sixpence, which I could not politely refuse.

Customers in the Canongate jail, and in the Old Tolbooth, renowned as the 'Heart of Mid-Lothian,' were less munificent, but considerably more hearty in their intercourse. The greater number of them were

third-rate shopkeepers, who, after struggling for years against debts, rents, and taxes, had finally succumbed to the sheriff-officer, and been drifted to a safe anchorage, which they did not seem to think particularly unpleasant. The law had done its worst upon them, and for a time they were at rest.

The chief of these prisons, the Old Tolbooth, was a tall black building in the High Street, noted in the national annals: That Tolbooth on the lofty pinnacle of which was ignominiously stuck the head of the gallant Marquis of Montrose, in 1650, and whence, after bleaching for ten years, it was taken down and replaced by the head of the Marquis of Argyll: That Tolbooth which Byron has referred to with unjustifiable bitterness in his *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers:*

> 'Arthur's steep summit nodded to its base,
> The surly Tolbooth scarcely kept her place.
> The Tolbooth felt—for marble sometimes can,
> On such occasions, feel as much as man—
> The Tolbooth felt defrauded of her charms,
> If Jeffrey died except within her arms.'

After undergoing various mutations, this gloomy structure now served the double purpose of a jail for debtors and criminals. The two departments were quite distinct, the apartments for criminals being in the east end, and those for debtors being in the west. But all entered by the same door—that portal where the rioters of the Porteous Mob thundered in 1736. This doorway, situated at the foot of the south-eastern turret, was opened by a turnkey who was seated outside, or in a small adjoining vault on the ground-floor of the building. Level with it, facing the north, and occupying the remainder of the street-floor, was the office of the

Town-guard, who were ready at hand in case of any emergency. Having gained an access by the outer portal of the Tolbooth, you ascended a flight of about twenty steps to an inner door, which was opened on the ringing of a bell by the outer turnkey. You were now in the Hall, a spacious apartment, with a sanded stone floor, and seats along the sides. It was well lighted by a large stanchioned window facing the south. Fixed on the wall nearly opposite the doorway, there was a black board, on which was painted the following admonitory inscription, that is said to have been originally and specially designed for the King's Bench Prison:

'A prison is a house of care,
A place where none can thrive,
A touchstone true to try a friend,
A grave for men alive—
Sometimes a house of right,
Sometimes a house of wrong,
Sometimes a place for jades and thieves,
And honest men among.'

The Hall was a common vestibule, whence an entrance was gained to the two departments. While the criminals were confined to their rooms in the East End, the prisoners under civil process, who were lodged in the West End, moved about at pleasure during the day from the Hall to the several apartments on two upper stories; and, accordingly, for them there was almost the freedom of a lodging-house. The place of public execution was the flat roof of a low building attached to the western gable, and, to reach it, convicts were conducted across the Hall.

My knowledge of this strange old jail needs a word of explanation. Among the debtors whom I visited in

the way of business, there was one, a young man, who had been previously known to our family. Having failed in business under circumstances which led to an unusually long imprisonment, I frequently saw him, and was able to learn numerous particulars concerning the West-Enders and their ways of living, which would otherwise have been beyond my reach. As the Tolbooth was removed in 1817, it was my fortune to be its visitor during the last three years of its existence, and to become familiarised with a condition of things of which there is now no parallel. My experiences of Tolbooth life were in the days of free-and-easy prison arrangements. As yet, neither county prison boards nor prison inspectors had been heard of. The magistrates and council undertook the responsibility of cost and management, also appointed the officials, the chief of whom, honoured with the designation of Captain, was ordinarily some old citizen who stood well with the corporation. There was a simplicity about the whole system, which is now difficult to be realised by any description. So far as the debtors were concerned, the prison was little else than a union of lodging-house and tavern, under lock and key. Acquaintances might call as often and stay as long as they pleased. The inmates and their visitors, if they felt inclined, could treat themselves to refreshments in a cosy little apartment, half-tavern, half-kitchen, superintended by a portly female, styled Lucky Laing, whence issued pretty frequently the pleasant sounds of broiling beef-steaks, and the drawings of corks from bottles of ale and porter.

Much of the cordiality that prevailed was due to the governor, Captain Sibbald, a benevolently disposed little man, with a merry twinkle in his eyes, dressed in a

sober pepper-and-salt coloured suit. I heard no end of his acts of kindness to debtors as well as criminals, or of putting poor youths in the way of well-doing who had passed through his hands. Although his salary was no more than a hundred and fifty pounds a year, he was known to take on himself the obligation of guaranteeing the payment of a debt, rather than retain in custody a poor man with a large family, brought to him for imprisonment. In the East End, he had almost constantly a male or female convict under sentence of death; and though not able to mitigate their unhappy doom, he always endeavoured to assuage their present sufferings. Until his time, they had been literally fed on bread and water, during the six weeks that elapsed between sentence and execution. He generously broke through this harsh rule, not a little to the dissatisfaction of the Lord Advocate of the day; but in the contest his humanity prevailed, and the rule was ever after practically relaxed. I heard it approvingly said of him, that at his own expense he procured a dentist to draw a tooth which so tortured a convict that he could not sleep; it was further reported that he always saw that the men were comfortably shaved on the morning of the day they were to be hanged, and that he uniformly pressed a glass of wine on the women on their being conducted through the Hall to execution. Such was the gossip of the prison.

One of the strange things told of the Tolbooth is, that on various occasions it gave a secure retreat to persons who fled from justice. A gentleman alleged to have been concerned in the Rye-House Plot, in the reign of Charles II., and of whom the civil authorities were in search, received protection from a friend in the

Tolbooth, where no one thought of looking for him; and whence he eventually escaped to the continent. In 1746, there was a similar case of protection to a gentleman who was sought after ineffectually for his concern in the Rebellion.

I can realise the truth of these traditions, by having found a voluntary resident in the Tolbooth, who was not recognised as a prisoner, or as being there at all. This was a gifted but erratic genius, known by his familiar Christian name, Davie, who, after suffering a variety of disasters, received sympathy and succour among his friends in the West End. Of course, for this indulgence, he was indebted to the good-hearted governor, who, like his predecessors, did not find it to be consistent with his duty to be too particular. In making his last round at night, and ascending the spiral staircase, which was provided with a rope that performed the part of a hand-rail, he would considerately, as if by accident, jingle the bunch of well-worn keys, by way of announcing his approach. In casting a look around the apartment to see that all strangers were gone, and saying 'Good-night, gentlemen,' he might have known, had he cared to know, that one of the inmates shared his bed with Davie, who was at that very moment—thanks to the jingle of the keys—ensconced upright in a tight-fitting wall-press at the corner of the apartment.

I had often occasion to meet and interchange courtesies with Davie, who was an essential adjunct of the prison fraternity. Having lost means, character, and friends in the outer world, he was duly qualified by his obliging manners, his accomplishments, and his poverty, to be an acceptable guest of the West-Enders. The Tolbooth was his home by choice. He lived in it for

years, seeing out successive groups of debtors, but always as much esteemed by the new-comers as by the older residents. How they could have done without him, it is painful to consider. He was a general factotum—went out and made purchases for them, carried messages to law-agents, posted letters, and, on great occasions, ordered in dinners from Mrs Ferguson's, a noted tavern in the neighbourhood. His jocularities, his singing, and his ability to take a hand at whist, were, of course, recommendations of a high order. There were other reasons for thinking well of Davie. He was modest as regards his own wants. Debtors of the better class, on quitting the prison, would make him a present of a few articles of dress, and perhaps kindly leave half-a-crown in one of the pockets. Davie could not be said to have any regular meals. He lived principally on odd crusts of bread, pieces of biscuits, drams, and drops of ale or porter. Talking of drams, it was against rule to introduce spirits into the prison, but, through the agency of Davie, there never was any particular scarcity of the article. As a scout serviceable in this as in other things, he stood well with Peter, the keeper of the door in the Hall, rather a good-humoured Cerberus. Peter was blind of an eye, which some might think an advantage; he wore a woollen cap on his bald head, and always walked softly about the sanded stone floor in carpet-shoes.

The West End was two rooms in breadth, one entering from the other. The windows in these apartments looked only south and north, but the inmates had a device for extending the prospect in other directions. They had only to hold out a mirror beyond the stanchions to catch a glimpse of who was at the portal

near the north-west corner of St Giles, or of what was going on in the street. By means of this kind, they were able to see the remnant of the 42d Regiment as it marched towards the castle on its return from Waterloo. The method of looking directly westwards up the Lawnmarket was still more ingenious. In the gable of the building there was a hole or slit into which the beam of the gallows was inserted for public executions. So intruded, the beam projected about two feet into one of the debtors' apartments, where it made its appearance near the foot of the bed in which Davie participated. I remember paying a visit to the prison on the day after an execution, while it was still a subject of conversation. Confined to their rooms during the tragical ceremony, one of the debtors, along with Davie, I was told, had jocularly seated themselves on the inner end of the beam at the time the miserable culprit was in the course of being suspended from the other. The hole in the gable was already closed, but as executions, according to the heartless policy of the period, were then frequent, the building was performed in a superficial way. In the centre of the masonry, a cork was introduced by particular request, and this being pulled out at pleasure, a view was obtained in the required direction—a convenience this of no small consequence to the West-Enders, which the obliging governor of the establishment did not notice or call in question.

Besides Davie, who became a naturalised inhabitant of the Tolbooth, there were other hangers-on in whose society the inmates found a degree of solace. For the greater part, the debtors were attempting to carry through the legal process of liberation known as the *cessio*, and

accordingly required the assistance of law-practitioners. Professional aid in these and other matters was usually rendered by a class of persons who it would be hazardous to say were on the roll of authorised attorneys. A kind of supernumeraries in the profession, and with a knowledge of forms, they hung about the prisons for jobs; modestly, as it were, keeping on the outskirts of society, in order to gather up the defiled crumbs which the notabilities of the law disdained to recognise. For the services which they rendered to the poorer order of clients, it is not clear that payment was made in coin. Seemingly, they had the run of the prison. When half-a-mutchkin was smuggled in through Davie's valuable assistance, they came in for a tasting, and at various hours of the day—not being particular as to time of luncheon—they held deeply interesting conferences in Lucky Laing's tavern, over smoking dishes of steaks and creaming tumblers of porter. Talking plentifully between mouthfuls, and winking knowingly with one eye, they held out such sanguine hopes of getting things carried through cheaply—no expense to speak of but the office fees—as could not fail to raise the drooping spirits of the poor wives who came to hold council with their imprisoned husbands.

The law-agents of this stamp who frequented the West End had for coadjutor a medical practitioner, not less necessary than themselves in carrying on operations. I am not aware that in the present day the doctor who haunted the Tolbooth has any distinct representative. He had at one time occupied a respectable position as a medical practitioner, but now, broken down by intemperance, he confined his professional services to the inmates of the West End, to

whom he made himself presentable by blacking the white edges of his button-moulds with ink, and keeping a band of faded crape on his hat, as if always in deep mourning. It was fortunate for the doctor that the law had considerately instituted the *cessio.* He lived upon it. Without it, there was no visible refuge but the work-house. His function consisted in granting sick certificates—fee, five shillings, with a dram as a matter of course, and a biscuit to give the refection an air of respectability. In virtue of a certificate of this nature, fortified by a warrant from the court, the ailing debtor was allowed to go home to his sorrowing family, and his prescribed thirty days' imprisonment became a sort of legal fiction. At all events, the law was satisfied, which was what the West-Enders alone cared for. I lost sight of the doctor after the Tolbooth was pulled down in 1817. He then disappeared from the visible creation, as a result of one of the many statutory enactments that have latterly rubbed out our social eccentricities.

As an eddy corner of the world's tumultuous current, into which light floating wreck was naturally swept, the Old Tolbooth, with its scenes of grief and drollery, might not be supposed to be quite an appropriate resort for a lad who had to make his way in the sober track of life. All I can summon to remembrance in the matter is, that I here incidentally saw down into the depths of society, to which the affluent classes have little opportunity of penetrating. My experiences among the shifty sub-middle classes, here as elsewhere, proved by no means the least valuable part of my training for the career into which I was ultimately drifted. Nor has the recollection of the Old Tolbooth and its inmates ever

ceased to afford a fund of entertainment. In the Memoirs of a celebrated duchess, we are favoured with the contrast which Her Grace draws between her present grand dull routine of existence, and the times long past, when, skirmishing with pecuniary difficulties, she pursued the life of an actress; her preference being decidedly given for 'lang syne,' with its sparkling wit, glee, and poverty, unburdened with the vapid solemnities of etiquette. The duchess, however, had no wish to return to these delightful early pursuits.

I made such attempts as were at all practicable, while an apprentice, to remedy the defects of my education at school. Nothing in that way could be done in the shop, for there reading was proscribed. But allowed to take home a book for study, I gladly availed myself of the privilege. The mornings in summer, when light cost nothing, were my chief reliance. Fatigued with trudging about, I was not naturally inclined to rise, but on this and some other points I overruled the will, and forced myself to get up at five o'clock, and have a spell at reading until it was time to think of moving off—my brother, when he was with me, doing the same. In this way I made some progress in French, with the pronunciation of which I was already familiar from the speech of the French prisoners of war at Peebles. I likewise dipped into several books of solid worth—such as Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, Locke's *Human Understanding*, Paley's *Moral Philosophy*, and Blair's *Belles-Lettres*—fixing the leading facts and theories in my memory by a note-book for the purpose. In another book, I kept for years an accurate account of my expenses, not allowing a single halfpenny to escape record.

In the winter of 1815–16, when the cold and cost of candle-light would have detained me in bed, I was so fortunate as to discover an agreeable means of spending my mornings. The sale of lottery tickets, I have said, formed a branch of my employer's business. Besides distributing the lottery circulars, it fell to my lot to paste all the large show-boards with posters of glaring colours, bearing the words 'Lucky Office,' 'Twenty Thousand Pounds still in the Wheel,' and such-like seductive announcements. The board-carriers—shilling-a-day men—were usually a broken-down set of characters; as, for example, old waiters and footmen, with pale flabby faces and purple noses; discharged soldiers, who had returned in a shattered condition from the wars; and tattered operatives of middle age, ruined by dram-drinking.

Among the last-named class of board-carriers, there was a journeyman baker who had an eye irretrievably damaged by some rough, but possibly not unprovoked, usage in a king's birthday riot. What from the bad eye, and what from whiskey, this unfortunate being had fallen out of regular employment. Now and then, when there was a push in the trade, as at the New-year, he got a day's work from his old employer, a baker in Canal Street. He was not at all nice as to occupation: he would deliver hand-bills, perambulate the streets with a lottery-board at the top of a pole over his shoulder, or anything else that cast up—only he needed a little watching, for, when out on a job with the relics of the previous day's shilling in his pocket, he was prone to thirstiness in passing a dram-shop, into which he would dive, board and all, regardless of consequences.

From this hopeful personage, whom it was my duty to look after, I one day had a proposition, which he had been charged to communicate. If I pleased, he would introduce me to his occasional employer, the baker in Canal Street, who, he said, was passionately fond of reading, but without leisure for its gratification. If I would go early—very early—say five o'clock in the morning, and read aloud to him and his two sons, while they were preparing their batch, I should be regularly rewarded for my trouble with a penny roll newly drawn from the oven. Hot rolls, as I have since learned, are not to be recommended for the stomach, but I could not in these times afford to be punctilious. The proposal was too captivating to be resisted.

Behold me, then, quitting my lodgings in the West Port, before five o'clock in the winter mornings, and pursuing my way across the town to the cluster of sunk streets below the North Bridge, of which Canal Street was the principal. The scene of operations was a cellar of confined dimensions, reached by a flight of steps descending from the street, and possessing a small back window immediately beyond the baker's kneading-board. Seated on a folded-up sack in the sole of the window, with a book in one hand and a penny candle stuck in a bottle near the other, I went to work for the amusement of the company. The baker was not particular as to subject. All he stipulated for was something comic and laughable. Aware of his tastes, I tried him first with the jocularities of *Roderick Random*, which was a great success, and produced shouts of laughter. I followed this up with other works of Smollett, also with the novels of Fielding, and with

Gil Blas; the tricks and grotesque rogueries in this last-mentioned work of fiction giving the baker and his two sons unqualified satisfaction. My services as a reader for two and a half hours every morning were unfailingly recompensed by a donation of the anticipated roll, with which, after getting myself brushed of the flour, I went on my way to shop-opening, lamp-cleaning, and all the rest of it, at Calton Street. It would be vain in the present day to try to discover the baker's work-shop, where these morning performances took place, for the whole of the buildings in this quarter have been removed to make way for the North British Railway station.

Such, with minor variations, was my mode of life for several years—an almost ceaseless drudgery. At that period, there were no public institutions of a popular kind to stimulate and regulate plans of self-culture. The School of Arts, the precursor of mechanics' institutions, was not set on foot until 1821. Young persons in humble circumstances were still left to grope their way. They might spend their spare hours in study, if they had a mind; nobody cared anything at all about it. Neither were young men, by the usages of business, allowed any time to carry out fancies as to mental improvement. Shop-hours extended from half-past seven o'clock in the morning till nine at night, with no abatement on Saturdays. Notions of mere amusement I did not dare to entertain. The Theatre Royal had its attractions, but expense, if nothing else, stood in the way. I had as yet been only once in the theatre. A friend of our family had treated me to the shilling-gallery, shortly after coming to Edinburgh; it was to see John Kemble, who played Rollo—a subject of absorbing

interest—and not for a number of years afterwards could I venture on any species of theatrical indulgence. In gracefully submitting to this self-denial, perhaps I had no great merit. So far as spare time was concerned, my mind had become occupied not only in the morning readings and study, but in sundry scientific experiments, to which I was led by James King, who was an apprentice to a seedsman next door.

King was two to three years my senior, and I looked up to him on that account as well as for his general ability. He came from Fife, which is noted for the saliency and genius of its people. Our proximity to each other, and similarity of tastes, brought us into acquaintance. He had a younger brother, George, an apprentice to Mr Crombie, a well-known dyer, with whom I also became acquainted; and when my brother Robert came to town to lodge with me, he was introduced to the circle. We formed, so to speak, a club of four lads, devoted to some species of scientific inquiry and recreation. The Kings were great upon chemistry. Their talk was of retorts, alkalies, acids, combustion, and oxygen gas, all which gave me a favourable opinion of their learning. They likewise spoke so familiarly of electricity, Leyden jars, and the galvanic pile, as to excite in me a desire to know something of these marvels. Chemistry and electricity became accordingly the subject of discussion and experiment; but the difficulty was to know where experiments could be conducted. My lodgings were out of the question. So were those of the Kings. They lived in a garret, situated immediately behind the well on the south side of the Grassmarket, which it was inexpedient to constitute a hall of science, and the notion of resorting to

it was given up. In this dilemma, a friendly and every way suitable retreat, which remains vividly in my recollections, presented itself, and was gratefully accepted.

As you go up a narrow and steep road to the Calton Hill, at the foot of Leith Street, a covered passage descends and strikes off to the left, and conducts you to a confined court, wherein stood—and perhaps still stands—a small cottage with a tiled roof, that had to all appearance existed long before the streets with which it was environed. The back window in Calton Street, where I used to clean the lamps, looked into the court, and I could notice that the little old-fashioned cottage was occupied by a thin and aged personage with a bright-brown scratch-wig, who, in fine weather, made his appearance on the pavement as a common street-porter. The name by which he was known in the neighbourhood was Jamie Alexander. As voucher for his respectability, he wore on the left breast of his coat a pewter badge, marked No. 3, indicative of the early period at which he had been enrolled by the magistrates in the fraternity of porters; and of this antiquity of his emblem of office he felt naturally proud; all other porters, however old, being boys in comparison, and not possessing that distinction of rank which he did.

Jamie was a Highlander by birth, and in his youth, long ago, had been a servant to a Mr Tytler, a gentleman of literary and scientific attainments, with whom he had travelled and seen the world, and in whose company he had picked up a smattering of learned ideas and words. With this grounding, and naturally handy, Jamie was a kind of Jack-of-all-trades. It was in his capacity of porter that King and I had become

acquainted with him, but at his advanced age he relied more distinctly on less toilsome pursuits. The versatility of his talents rendered him peculiarly acceptable as an acquaintance, and his house was well adapted for our meetings. This ancient mansion consisted of only a single apartment: it was kitchen, parlour, bedroom, and workshop all in one—a queer and incongruous jumble, like the mind of the occupant.

Usually, at night, we found Jamie seated at one side of his fire, and his wife Janet, a more common-place character, at the other. Behind the old man was his work-bench, loaded with a variety of tools and odds and ends adapted to a leading branch of employment, which consisted in clasping broken china and crystal for the stoneware shops. This operation he performed with a neatness that surprised most persons, who knew that he had lost the sight of one of his eyes. It did not seem to be generally understood that Jamie had a contrivance satisfactory to himself for remedying this ocular deficiency. In his old pair of spectacles he fixed two glasses for the seeing eye, and he maintained that by this arrangement of a double lens, his single eye was as good to him as two—a point we did not think fit to contest.

To vary the routine of employment, and at the same time enjoy a little outdoor recreation, Jamie at times took a job from the undertakers. Dressed in a threadbare black suit, he walked as a *saulie* before the higher class of funerals, with his hat under his arm, and the black velvet cap of a running-footman covering his brown wig. In connection with his profession of saulie, he related numerous traditionary anecdotes illustrative of the festivities of deceased saulie and gumfler men in

the servants-hall of great houses,* while waiting in lugubrious habiliments to head the funeral solemnity—his stories reminding one of the interspersal of scenes of drollery throughout the tragedies of Shakspeare, and I doubt not, true to nature. Besides these diverting reminiscences of grand funerals, he gave his experiences of grave-digging in the Calton burying-ground, where he often assisted. He confidently stated that the digging of graves was a wonderfully exhilarating and healthful occupation, if executed with proper skill and leisure. Nothing, in his opinion, was so efficacious in assuaging a rheumatism in the back, or securing long life; and to hear him on this subject, you would have thought it would be a good thing in the way of health and amusement to take to regular exercise in grave-digging. It appeared that independently of payment for this kind of labour according to tariff, Jamie seldom left the ground without a few bits of old coffin in good condition, which had been thrown to the surface in the course of excavation. Such pieces of wood, improved by seasoning in the earth, he said, excelled for some purposes of art. From them he made a common kind of fiddles, and also cheap wooden clocks.

With much oddity of character, there was a fine spirit of industry, cheerfulness, and contentment in the old man. As a Highlander, he spoke Gaelic, and from him I learned to be tolerably proficient in pronouncing that test in the language, *laogh*, the word for *calf*. With a love of the ancient music of the hills, he played the bagpipe, but this instrument, from deficiency of breath, he had

* Mutes bearing tall poles shrouded in black drapery are called in Scotland gumfler-men; such being a corruption of *gonfalonier*, the bearer of a *gonfalon*, or standard, in old ceremonial processions.

latterly laid aside, and taken to the Irish pipes, which are played by means of bellows under the arm. His pipes lay conveniently on a shelf over his work-bench, and taking them down, he, at our request, would favour us with a pibroch. Having finished the tune, he ordinarily delivered some oracular remarks on pipe-music in general, and of the operatic character of the pibroch in particular —the only time, by the way, I ever heard the thing explained.

Janet, the mistress of the mansion, did not greatly encourage our visits. Her chief concern in life seemed to consist in nursing a small and ingeniously made-up fire, which was apt to be seriously deranged by King's chemical experiments—such as the production of coal-gas in a blacking-bottle, used by way of retort—the proposal of lighting the city with gas having suggested this novel experiment. For a special reason, this old woman was not more favourable to electric science. Under King's advice and directions, my brother and I contrived, out of very poor resources, to procure a cylindrical electrifying-machine, with some apparatus to correspond. Having one night given Janet an electric *shock*, slily conveyed to her through a piece of damp tobacco, she ever after viewed the machine with the darkest suspicions. In these apprehensions her gray cat had some reason to join; when the Leyden jars were placed on the table, she fled to the roof of the bed, and there kept eyeing us during our mysterious incantations.

Sunday, with its blessed exemption from a dull round of duties, came weekly with its soothing influences; and this leads to a little explanation. I have already mentioned that I was at home on Sunday. Through the week, I toiled at my proper duties. On the Sabbath, I was an

independent being; and to this day of rest I habitually looked forward, not only as an interval of repose, but for the opportunity it afforded of seeing and holding converse with my mother, betwixt whom and myself there was an attachment which has been the solace of my existence. Nothing was allowed to detain me in town. For several years, I walked home to the country every Saturday night. Between nine and ten o'clock, in all states of the weather, summer and winter, I might have been found making the best of my way down the North Back of the Canongate, past Holyrood, across the King's Park by Muschet's Cairn, and so on through Portobello. It was necessary not to loiter by the way, for, with a somewhat limited wardrobe, a few things which I carried with me had to be washed and otherwise prepared before midnight. In these night-travels, my brother Robert, while he remained in town, accompanied me.

The Sundays spent on the shore of the Firth of Forth formed a refreshing change on the ordinary course of life. The salt-pans had ceased to send up their nauseous vapours and clouds of smoke. A pleasant and not uninstructive calm was experienced amidst the shell and tangle covered rocks, against which the pellucid waves of the sea dashed in unremitting murmurs. Usually, I went to Inveresk Church with other members of the family, and so became acquainted with Musselburgh and its environs. Sometimes I walked by a footpath across the fields by Brunstain and Millerhill to Dalkeith, to visit my grandmother, Mrs Noble, and her younger son David, who had recently been settled there (Robert, the elder son, having gone to Nova Scotia), and enjoyed the variety of accompanying them to the antique parish church of that pretty country town.

There was an immense charm in these occasional Sabbath-day walks to Dalkeith, in which I usually carried a French New Testament in my pocket for lingual exercise. The sunshine, the calm that prevailed, the fresh air, the singing of birds, the green leafy trees, and the blossoming wild-flowers by the way-side, all filled my heart with gladness, for they renewed my recollections of the country. The fields, stuck about with coal-pits, at which the gin-horses had intermitted their accustomed toil, were not such pretty fields as I had seen on Tweedside; still, they were environed with hedgerows, and formed a pleasing contrast to the huge rows of dingy buildings among which I pursued my ordinary employment. As a boy, I had passionately cultivated flowers in a little garden assigned to me, and now rejoiced to see a few growing by the side of the pathway. The Mid-Lothian primroses, I imagined—considering the neighbourhood of the coal-pits—had not the freshness and bloom of the primroses which I had gathered in the woods and dells at Neidpath; but still they were primroses, and, as the best within reach, I plucked and carried home a handful as a gift to my mother in her dreary residence at the Pans, and was pleased to see her put them in a glass with a little water, to preserve as a souvenir of my weekly visit.

The small smoke-dried community at these salt-pans was socially interesting. Along with the colliers in the neighbouring tiled hamlets, the salt-makers—at least the elderly among them—had at one time been serfs, and in that condition they had been legally sold along with the property on which they dwelt. I conversed with some of them on the subject. They and their children had been heritable fixtures to the spot. They

could neither leave at will nor change their profession. In short, they were in a sense slaves. I feel it to be curious that I should have seen and spoken to persons in this country who remembered being legally in a state of serfdom; and such they were until the year 1799, when an act of parliament abolished this last remnant of slavery in the British Islands. Appreciating the event, they set aside one day in the year as a festival commemorative of their liberation. Perhaps the custom of celebrating the day still exists.

After these Sunday communings with the family, I was on Monday morning off again for Edinburgh to have a fresh tug at the shop-shutters—carrying away with me, I need hardly say, all kinds of admonitory hints from my mother; the burden of her recommendations being to avoid low companions, to mind whom I was come of, and 'aye to haud forrit.' What was to become of me was, as she said, a perfect mystery; still there was nothing like securing a good character in the meanwhile—that was clear, at all events.

My mother, however, had more cause for uneasiness on her own than my account. The aspect of family affairs was acquiring additional gloom. My father was not the man for the situation he filled. In fact, he detested situations of all kinds. His rough and irritable spirit of independence gave him a dislike to be ordered by anybody. His feelings at this period were in a morbid condition, the result of circumstances already adverted to, and therefore not to be judged severely. Having unfortunately failed in the means of acting an independent part, he was perhaps on that account the more anxious that his sons should be successful in making the attempt. At anyrate, he

endeavoured to impress on me the vast necessity and advantage of, in all things, thinking for myself, and taking, as far as possible, an independent course. He objected to my ever entertaining the notion of continuing to serve any one after my apprenticeship had expired. No amount of salary was to tempt me; no prospect of ease to seduce me. I should strike out for myself, if it were only to sell books in a basket from door to door. There might be suffering and humiliation in the meantime; but I would be daily gaining experience, and, with prudence, accumulating means. If I behaved myself properly, a few years would set all to rights.

These disquisitions amused and probably had some effect in inspiring me. My father had strong convictions as to the propriety of allowing children to think and struggle for themselves; such, as he conveniently thought, being true kindness, and anything else little better than cruelty—and strictly speaking, he was right. Seated in his arm-chair at the Pans, with two or three of us about him, he would discourse in a pleasant way, mingling anecdote with philosophy—the purport of the whole being that I should continue to cultivate a spirit of independence, to learn to act and think for myself, and, in short, to be thankful that nothing was done for me.

Such was the run of my father's disquisitions. Unfortunately, his extreme views of independence did not comport with his functions as manager of the salt-works, where he suffered a species of ignominious banishment. Among the near neighbours were a few excise-officers set to watch over the works and give permits to purchasers. One of these officials was a Mr Stobie, in

whom there was a degree of interest; for, while in the position of an expectant of Excise, he had done duty for Robert Burns in his last illness, April 1796, when, as the poet says in a letter to Thomson: 'Ever since I wrote you last, I have only known existence by the pressure of the heavy hand of sickness, and have counted time by the repercussions of pain.' It redounded to the honour of Stobie that he acted gratuitously for Burns at this melancholy crisis, and it was pleasing for our family to make his acquaintance, and hear some particulars of the greatest among Scottish poets.

Beyond such acquaintanceships, there was little to compensate for the smoke, dirt, and misery that were endured at the Pans. The business in itself violated all my father's notions of propriety. It consisted almost wholly in supplying material for a contraband trade across the Border to England; the high duties on salt in the latter country rendering this a profitable traffic. Purchased in large quantities at Joppa and other salt-works, the bags were transferred in carts to Newcastleton in Liddesdale, where the article was stored by a dealer, and sold by him to be smuggled across the fells during the night. For years, this was a great trade. Perhaps it did not pertain to the Scotch salt-makers to urge the extinction of so flourishing a traffic; but neither could any one of susceptible feelings look on it with perfect complacency.

Whatever were the precise causes of discord, a disruption was precipitated by my father having the misfortune to be waylaid and robbed of some money which he had collected in the way of business in Edinburgh. Knocked down and grievously bruised about the head, he was found late at night lying helpless on the road,

and brought home by some good Samaritan. The painful circumstances connected with this untoward affair led to his being discharged from his office. In his now hapless state, greatly disabled by the injuries which he had received, and without means, the consideration of everything fell on my mother. Her mind rose to the occasion. Removing from the sooty precinct to one of a row of houses near Magdalene Bridge, on the road to Musselburgh, she prepared to set on foot a small business, and was not without hope of meeting with general sympathy and support, for, by her agreeable manners and exemplary conduct under various difficulties, she had made some good friends of different classes in the neighbourhood.

With something like dismay, I heard of this fresh disaster—the climax, it was to be hoped, of a series of agonising misfortunes. The house at the Pans had been about the most revolting of human habitations, but it at least gave shelter, and bore with it some means of livelihood. Now, all that was at an end. The future was to be a matter of new contrivance. Of course, I hastened from town to condole over present distresses, and share in the family counsels. On my unexpected arrival near midnight—cold, wet, and wayworn—all was silent in that poor home. In darkness by my mother's bed-side, I talked with her of the scheme she had projected. It was little I could do. Some insignificant savings were at her disposal, and so was a windfall over which I had cause for rejoicing. By a singular piece of good fortune, I had the previous day been presented with half a guinea by a good-hearted tradesman, on being sent to him with the agreeable intelligence that he had got the sixteenth of a twenty thousand

pound prize in the state lottery. The little bit of gold was put into my mother's hand. With emotion too great for words, my own hand was pressed gratefully in return. The loving pressure of that unseen hand in the midnight gloom, has it not proved more than the ordinary blessing of a mother on her son?

> 'All this, still legible in memory's page,
> And still to be so to my latest age,
> Adds joy to duty, makes me glad to pay
> Such honours to thee as my numbers may;
> Perhaps a frail memorial, but sincere—
> Not scorned in heaven, though little noticed here.'

Early in the following morning, I was back to business in Calton Street. My mother's ingenious efforts, conducted with consummate tact, and wholly regardless of toil, were successful. Her only embarrassment was my father, prematurely broken down in body and mind. It is not the purpose, however, of the present memoir to pursue the family history. Let us revert to the leading object in hand.

THE OLD TOLBOOTH, EDINBURGH.

CHAPTER V.

ROBERT'S EARLY DIFFICULTIES—1814 TO 1819.

IT will be necessary to go back a little, in order to trace the difficulties that were encountered by Robert in the early part of his career, while I was still following out the duties of an apprentice.

The family depression during this gloomy period was felt more acutely by my brother than by myself, for, besides being more susceptible in feelings, he was, from his gentle and retiring habits, less able to face the stern realities with which we were unitedly environed. Left, as has been said, for a time in Peebles to pursue his studies at the grammar-school, he was finally brought to Edinburgh, and placed at a noted classical academy—that of Mr Benjamin Mackay, in West Register Street, preparatory to being (if possible) sent to the university. There was an understanding in the family that, as the most suitable professional pursuit, he was to be prepared for the church. The expenses attending on this course of education were considerably beyond present capabilities, but all was to be smoothed over by a bursary, of which a distant relative held out some vague expectations.

When the family quitted Edinburgh, Robert accompanied them, but shortly afterwards, with a considerable strain on finances, he was associated with me in my West Port lodgings. Here, from the uncongenial habits with which he was brought in contact, he felt considerably out of place. I was fortunately absent during the greater part of the day in my accustomed duties; but he, after school hours, had to rely on such refuge as could be found at the unattractive fireside of our landlady, who, though disposed to be kind in her way, was so chilled by habits of penury as to give little consideration for the feelings of the poor scholar. He spoke to me of his sufferings and the efforts he made to assuage them. The want of warmth was his principal discomfort. Sometimes benumbed with cold, he was glad to adjourn to that ever hospitable retreat, the Old Tolbooth, where, like myself, he was received as a welcome visitor by the West-Enders; and it is not unworthy of being mentioned, that the oddities of character among these unfortunate, though on the whole joyous, prisoners, and their professional associates—not forgetting Davie—formed a fund of recollection on which he afterwards drew for literary purposes. That strange old prison, with its homely arrangements, was therefore to him, as to me, identified with early associations—a thing the remembrance of which became to both a subject of life-long amusement. There was also some exhilaration for him in occasionally attending the nightly book auctions, where, favoured with light and warmth, seated in a by-corner, he could study his lessons, as well as derive a degree of entertainment from the scene which was presented. A further source of evening recreation, but not till past nine o'clock, and

then only for an hour, was found in those meetings with the brothers King and myself for mutual scientific instruction.

Viewed apart from these solacements, his life was dreary in the extreme. Half-starved, unsympathised with, and looking for no comfort at home, he probably would have lost heart but for the daily exercises at school, where he stood as rival and class-fellow of Mackay's best pupils. A good Latinist considering his years, and appreciative of wit and humour, he had an immense love of the odes and satires of Horace, nor was he scarcely a less admirer of the classic myths of Virgil, for they touched on that chord of romance and legendary lore which vibrated in his own mental constitution. Besides studying these classics, he took a fancy for the metamorphoses and fluent versification of Ovid, and was entranced with the story-telling power of Livy, the most illustrious of the Roman historians. In Greek he made only a small progress.

At this time he began to compose verses both in English and Latin, a kind of exercise which, not being required in the routine of study, was altogether a work of supererogation. The taste for Latin versification was due to a somewhat strange cause. Conceiving an enthusiasm for Ovid's poetical theories of the metempsychosis, he endeavoured to emulate the original by writing verses similarly fanciful; and not only so, but he fervently embraced the principle of the Pythagoreans, as regards the impropriety of using animal food—a principle very unnecessary to insist upon while residing in our West Port lodgings. The notion was, of course, a boyish freak, which in due time wore off; but that he entertained it at school with the vehemence of

an ancient disciple of Pythagoras, indicates the intensity of his early convictions. In his efforts at Latin versification in the Ovidian style, he was sorely hampered by the want of books of reference, to which his better provided companions had access. He was in particular put to considerable straits for want of an English-Latin dictionary, in order to ascertain the best Latin equivalents for certain words in his own language. The difficulty was in a degree ingeniously got over by visiting a book-stall, on which conveniently lay for sale a copy of Ainsworth's dictionary. This, without challenge, he continued to consult several times a day, and was delighted to find the Latin words he stood in need of. From the benefit derived by these investigations he in after-years never saw the stall-keeper without feeling how much he was indebted to him for the use of his Ainsworth.

With all this plodding industry, Robert found time to indulge in another kind of explorations. Ever since his arrival in Edinburgh, and without suggestion from any one, he had taken a pleasure in examining, at fitting times, what was ancient and historically interesting in the Old Town, which, for tastes of this kind, presents a peculiarly comprehensive field of inquiry. Once crowded within defensive walls, the older part of the city remained a dense cluster of tall dark buildings, lining the central street and diverging lanes, or closes, with comparatively little change in exterior aspect. However altered as regards the quality of the dwellers on the different floors, the tenements still exhibited innumerable artistic and heraldic tokens of the past; nor were the environs of the town less illustrative of moving incidents of the olden time. To this huge

antiquarian preserve, as it might be called, with its varied legends, my brother immediately attached himself with the fervour of a first love, for so enduring was it as materially to tinge the rest of his existence.

Patiently ranging up one close and down another, ascending stairs, and poking into obscure courts, he took note of carvings over doorways, pondered on the structure of old gables and windows, examined *risps*—the antique mechanism which had answered the purpose of door-knockers; and extending the scope of his researches, scarcely a bit of Arthur's Seat or the Braid Hills was left unexplored. The Borough-moor, where James IV. marshalled his army before marching to the fatal field of Flodden; the 'bore-stone,' in which, on that occasion, was planted the royal standard—

> 'The staff, a pine tree, strong and straight,
> Pitched deeply in a massive stone,
> Which still in memory is shewn,
> Yet bent beneath the standard's weight
> Whene'er the western wind unrolled,
> With toil, the huge and cumbrous fold,
> And gave to view the dazzling field,
> Where in proud Scotland's royal shield,
> The ruddy lion ramped in gold.'
>
> —*Marmion.*

Royston, where the Earl of Hertford landed with an English army, and proceeded to set fire to and destroy Edinburgh; the spot at the Kirk of Field, where Darnley was blown up; the tomb of the Earl of Murray; the grassy mounds in Bruntsfield Links, which formed the relics of Cromwell's batteries when besieging the castle after the victory of Dunbar; the grave-stone in the Greyfriars Churchyard on which, in 1638, was signed the National Covenant; the adjoining enclosure, in

which, for a time, was pent up, like cattle, the crowd of prisoners taken at the battle of Bothwell Bridge; the closed-up postern of the castle surmounting the precipitous rocks up which Claverhouse, Viscount Dundee, clambered to confer with the governor (and how he got either up or down no one can tell), when setting out for his last field, Killiecrankie; these, and such like historical memorials, became all familiar to my brother by making good use of intervals that could be spared from his daily attendance at the academy.

Though only twelve months had elapsed since he came from the country, and not yet fourteen years of age, he already possessed a knowledge of things concerning the old city and its romantic history which many, it may be supposed, do not acquire in the course of a lifetime. While most other youths, his school-mates, gave themselves up to amusements not unbecoming to their age, his recreations had in them all something of the nature of instruction. And such were his extraordinary powers of memory, that whatever he saw or learned, he never forgot; everything which could interest the mind being treasured up as a fund of delightful recollections, ready to be of service when wanted.

At the academy were a few boys, the sons of citizens, who indulged in fancies not unlike his own, and with whom he formed a lasting friendship. They could tell legendary stories of marvellous events in the city annals, connected with reputed wizards, noted eccentric characters, and remarkable criminals, to which he listened with avidity—as, for example, the story of Major Weir, who, for the commission of a series of atrocities, was condemned and executed in 1670, and whose house in

the West Bow enjoyed the reputation of being so much under the dominion of evil spirits, that no person would live in it for more than a hundred years afterwards;—Or the story of Deacon Brodie, a man moving in a good position, who, having long secretly carried on a system of depredations, was ultimately condemned and executed for committing a burglary on the Excise Office, 1788;—Or the still more curious story of a lad who, while under sentence of death in the Old Tolbooth, escaped by a clever device of his father, and lay for weeks concealed in the mausoleum of the 'Bluidy Mackenyie,' where he was secretly supplied with food by the boys of Heriot's Hospital, till he escaped from the country.

By these varied means in his early youth, in the midst of difficulties, Robert laid the foundation of much that was afterwards of value in literature; although at the time he was only satisfying a natural craving for what was traditionally curious. Looking back to the days when we lived together in the West Port, I cannot recollect that he ever spent a moment in what was purely amusing, or of no practical avail. Nor was this a sacrifice. The acquisition of knowledge was with him the highest of earthly enjoyments. It was well for him that he had these soothing resources. What his trials were at this time may be learned from the following passages in a letter written by him, in 1829, to the young lady to whom he was shortly afterwards married:

'My brother William and I lived in lodgings together. Our room and bed cost three shillings a week. It was in the West Port, near Burke's place. I cannot understand how I should ever have lived in it. The woman who kept the lodgings was a Peebles woman, who knew and wished to be kind to us. She was, however, of a

very narrow disposition, partly the result of poverty. I used to be in great distress for want of fire. I could not afford either that or candle myself. So I have often sat beside her kitchen fire—if fire it could be called, which was only a little heap of embers—reading Horace and conning my dictionary by a light which required me to hold the books almost close to the grate. What a miserable winter that was! Yet I cannot help feeling proud of my trials at that time. My brother and I—he then between fifteen and sixteen, I between thirteen and fourteen—had made a resolution together that we would exercise the last degree of self-denial. My brother actually saved money off his income. I remember seeing him take five-and-twenty shillings out of a closed box which he kept to receive his savings; and that was the spare money of only a twelvemonth. I daresay the Potterrow itself never sheltered two divinity students of such abstinent habits as ours. My father's prospects blackened towards the end of the winter; and even the small cost of my board and lodging at length became too much for him. I then for some time spent the night at Joppa Pans, and regularly every morning walked, lame as I was, to Edinburgh to attend school. Through all these distresses, I preserved the best of health, though perhaps my long fasts at so critical a period of life repressed my growth. A darker period than even this ensued: my father lost his situation, and I was withdrawn from a course of learning which it was seen I should never be able to complete.'

Such is a fair account of the termination of Robert's educational career. It can be supplemented from my own recollections, as well as from some memoranda which he wrote regarding this early period. When,

after a due preparation at the academy of Mr Mackay (whose kindness was ever gratefully remembered by my brother), the time came for attending the university, for which a bursary had been vaguely anticipated, expectations of the bursary came to naught, and all pecuniary means were now in a state of lamentable exhaustion. Yet, to the last, Robert was buoyed up with a hope that he would somehow be advanced to the Humanity class in the college. His awakening from this fond dream was correspondingly disappointing. The way in which, as an enthusiastic scholar, he was restrained by poverty from going through a university course is painfully depicted:

'Till the college opened, it was fully intended that I should go to it; and accordingly, when the day arrived, I proceeded to that illustrious seminary of learning, along with other boys who ranked with me at Mackay's, and was present at the inaugural meeting of the Humanity class for the season. The fees, however, were found an insurmountable difficulty; and with feelings I shall not attempt to describe, I was obliged to turn back from a course in which I saw so many of my companions about to start, with every advantage in their favour, though I was sensible that hardly any of them cared so much for the pleasure of the race, or was so ambitious of its eventual honours as myself.' Continuing for a short time at the academy, he adds: 'At length, in the month of April or May 1816, I quitted school for ever, my parents having perceived that, since I was not to go forward in a learned professional career, it was necessary that I should apply decidedly and immediately to something else.'

At this sad downcome, there was mourning over the

ruin of long-cherished hopes; and yet the circumstance ought in reality to have been a cause for rejoicing. I greatly doubt if my brother would, according to ordinary expectations, ever have excelled as a clergyman. He was deficient in oratorical qualities, nor did he possess to a sufficient degree that self-possession which is indispensable to a successful public speaker. Nature had destined him to wield the pen, not to live by exercise of the tongue. In the meanwhile, he was greatly downcast. Returning home, his privations were now greater than my own, for they were aggravated by the spectacle of domestic troubles, from which, except at weekly intervals, I was happily exempt.

Depressed, and it might be said friendless, with only his Horace and a few other Latin books, over which he would pore lovingly for hours, he was at this painful juncture not unconscious that he should make some sort of effort at self-reliance. He could arrive at no other conviction. In the picturesque language of the Psalmist, his 'kinsmen stood afar off,' a circumstance which unhappily roused feelings much more bitter than any experienced in my own less delicately framed mental system. Sometimes wandering about with a sense of desolation, he abandoned himself to an agony of grief and despair.

For a brief space, he procured a little private teaching at Portobello. Afterwards, a place was procured for him in the counting-house of a merchant, who resided in Pilrig Street, situated between Edinburgh and Leith; but this involved a journey on foot to and fro daily of altogether ten miles, with the poorest possible requital. At the end of six months this employment came to an end, and for a few weeks he filled a similar

situation in Mitchell Street, Leith. 'From that place,' he says, in the letter above referred to, 'I was discharged, for no other reason that I can think of but that my employer thought me too stupid to be likely ever to do him any good. I was now in the miserable situation of a youth betwixt fifteen and sixteen, who, having passed the proper period without acquiring the groundwork of a profession, is totally *hors de combat*, and has the prospect of evermore continuing so. I was now, however, at the bottom of the wheel. Now came the time to rise. You have already some notion of my self-denial and fortitude of mind. Now came the time to exert all my faculties.' He then alludes to circumstances of which I am able to give a more explicit detail.

At this dismal period, when, as he says, he was 'at the bottom of the wheel,' I saw him only on Sundays, and it was on such occasions alone that we had an opportunity for private consultation. On one of these Sabbath evenings, we sat down together in deep cogitation on a grassy knoll overlooking the Firth and the distant shores of Fife. The scene, placid and beautiful, befitting the calm which seemed appropriate to the day of rest, assorted ill with the pressure of those personal necessities that demanded immediate and far from pleasant consideration. Jeremy Taylor has consolingly remarked, that 'there is no man but hath blessings enough in present possession to outweigh the evils of a great affliction.' It may be so. I have no doubt it is so. How the blessings are to be recognised and brought into practical application, is sometimes the difficulty. In Robert's case, the blessings might have been stated as consisting of youth, health,

a fair education, moral and intellectual culture, and aspirations which embraced an earnest resolution to outweigh by honest industry the misfortunes into which he had been plunged by no fault of his own. Evidently, all depended on his being put on the right path. The great question for solution was what he should do, not only for his own subsistence, but to disembarrass the family, in which he acutely felt himself to be in the light of an encumbrance.

This was the critical moment that determined my brother's career. I had for some days been pondering on a scheme which might possibly help him out of his difficulties, provided he laid aside all ideas of false shame, and unhesitatingly followed my directions. The project was desperate, but nothing short of desperate measures was available. My suggestion was, that, abandoning all notions of securing employment as a clerk, teacher, or anything else, and stifling every emotion which had hitherto buoyed him up, he should, in the humblest possible style, begin the business of a bookseller. The idea of such an enterprise had passed through his own mind, but had been laid aside as wild and ridiculous, for he possessed neither stock nor capital, nor could he have recourse to any one to lend him assistance. 'I have thought of all that,' I said, 'and will shew you how the thing is to be done.' I now explained that in the family household there were still a number of old books, which had been dragged about from place to place, and were next to useless. The whole, if ranged on a shelf, would occupy about twelve feet, with perhaps a foot additional by including Horace and other school-books. They were certainly not much worth, but, if offered for sale, they might, as I imagined, form the foundation on

which a business could be constructed. I added that there was at the time an opening for the sale of cheap pocket Bibles, respecting which I could aid by my knowledge of the trade, and even go the length of starting him with one or two copies out of my slender savings.

The project being turned over and over and canvassed, proved acceptable. My father, so far from having any objections, assented to the scheme. The old books, Horace and all, were collected and carried off, the only one left being an old tattered black-letter Bible, of the date 1606, that had been in the family for two hundred years, and which, with scribblings on the blank pages, formed a kind of register of births, deaths, and marriages during that lengthened period. Too sacred to be ruthlessly made an article of commerce, it was fortunately reserved, and in due time became my only patrimony.

With the few old books so collected, Robert began business in 1818, when only sixteen years of age, from which time he became self-supporting, as I had been several years earlier. I should have hesitated to mention these particulars of my brother's early career, but for the fact of his having, in a letter to his friend Hugh Miller, dated March 1, 1854, and published in the *Life and Letters* of that person (1871), given an account, which, as a candid revelation of his own feelings, is fully more painful.

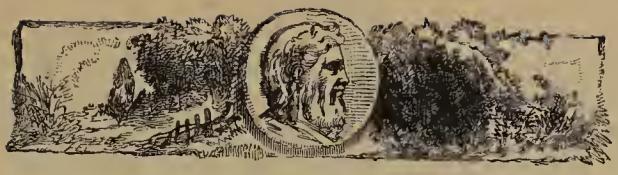
Writing to Miller, he says: 'Your autobiography has set me a-thinking of my own youthful days, which were like yours in point of hardship and humiliation, though different in many important circumstances. My being of the same age with you, to exactly a quarter of a year,

brings the idea of a certain parity more forcibly upon me. The differences are as curious to me as the resemblances. Notwithstanding your wonderful success as a writer, I think my literary tendency must have been a deeper and more absorbing peculiarity than yours, seeing that I took to Latin and to books both keenly and exclusively, while you broke down in your classical course, and had fully as great a passion for rough sport and enterprise as for reading, that being again a passion of which I never had one particle. This has, however, resulted in making you, what I never was inclined to be, a close observer of external nature—an immense advantage in your case. Still I think I could present against your hardy field observations by firth and fell, and cave and cliff, some striking analogies in the finding out and devouring of books, making my way, for instance, through a whole chestful of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, which I found in a lumber garret. I must also say, that an unfortunate tenderness of feet, scarcely yet got over, had much to do in making me mainly a fireside student. As to domestic connections and conditions, mine being of the middle classes, were superior to yours for the first twelve years. After that, my father being unfortunate in business, we were reduced to poverty, and came down to even humbler things than you experienced. I passed through some years of the direst hardship, not the least evil being a state of feeling quite unnatural in youth—a stern and burning defiance of a social world in which we were harshly and coldly treated by former friends, differing only in external respects from ourselves. In your life there is one crisis where I think your experiences must have been somewhat like mine; it is the brief period at

Inverness. Some of your expressions there bring all my own early feelings again to life. A disparity between the internal consciousness of powers and accomplishments and the external ostensible aspect, led in me to the very same wrong methods of setting myself forward as in you. There, of course, I meet you in warm sympathy. I have sometimes thought of describing my bitter painful youth to the world, as something in which it might read a lesson; but the retrospect is still too distressing. I screen it from the mental eye. The one grand fact it has impressed is the very small amount of brotherly assistance there is for the unfortunate in this world. . . . Till I proved that I could help myself, no friend came to me. Uncles, cousins, &c., in good positions in life—some of them stoops of kirks, by-the-bye—not one offered, or seemed inclined to give, the smallest assistance. The consequent defying, self-relying spirit in which, at sixteen, I set out as a bookseller, with only my own small collection of books as a stock—not worth more than two pounds, I believe—led to my being quickly independent of all aid; but it has not been all a gain, for I am now sensible that my spirit of self-reliance too often manifested itself in an unsocial, unamiable light, while my recollections of "honest poverty" may have made me too eager to attain and secure worldly prosperity.'

The place at which Robert attempted the adventurous project of selling the wreck of the family library, along with his own small parcel of school-books, was Leith Walk, where a shop of a particularly humble kind, at a yearly rent of six pounds, with space for a stall in front, was procured for the purpose. The situation of this

unpretending place of business was opposite Pilrig Avenue. Here he may be said to have set up house, for, provided with a few articles of furniture, and exercising a rigorous frugality, he proposed to live in his very limited establishment. To keep him company, and aid by my professional advice, as well as lessen his expenses, I went to reside with him—quitting, with my blue painted box, my quarters in the West Port, for which I entertained no special attachment. Unless for the pleasure of associating with my brother, and talking over our plans, the change did not immediately bring any assuagement of condition. So miserably was the place furnished, that the first night we had no bed, but lay on the floor, with a rug for covering, and a bundle of books for pillow. Afterwards, a bed stuffed with chaff made things a little easier, and, rolled up during the day, the bed with its rug answered as a convenient sofa. Rather a hard kind of life this! In one sense it was so, but I cannot remember ever caring much about the hardship. The whole affair was treated as an amusing adventure. The very shifts we were put to had in them something to laugh at. There was likewise an undefined but comforting feeling that by endurance matters would mend, and so with modest trust, as yielding to our lot, we cheerfully submitted to present privations. The time was near at hand when I should more than ever have to exercise a thoughtful degree of self-reliance.



CHAPTER VI.

MY OWN COMMENCEMENT IN BUSINESS—1819 TO 1821.

LATE on a Saturday evening in May 1819, my apprenticeship came to a close, and I walked away with five shillings in my pocket—to which sum my weekly wages had been latterly and considerately advanced. My employer, to do him every justice, offered to retain me as assistant at a reasonable salary; but I liked as little to remain as to try my luck elsewhere as a subordinate. Whether influenced by my father's harangues about independence, or by my own natural instincts, I had formed the resolution to be my own master, and concluded that the sooner I was so the better. And so, at nineteen years of age, I was left to my shifts.

The exploit was somewhat hazardous, and unless on special grounds, I would not recommend it to be followed. Society is composed of employers and employed. All cannot be masters. The employed may happen to be the best off of the two; at all events, they are burdened with less responsibility. My resolution, therefore, to fight my way, inch by inch, entirely on my own account, was, I acknowledge, an eccentricity. Yet, who can lay down any precise rule on this point?

Looking at all available circumstances, every one must think for himself, and take the consequences. In the ordinary view of affairs, my prospects were not particularly cheering. Exclusive of the five shillings in my pocket, I was without any pecuniary reliance whatsoever. There were, however, some things in my favour. As in my brother's case, I had youth, health, hope, resolution, and was as free from expensive habits and tastes as from any species of embarrassing obligation. There was nothing to keep me back, unless it might be the comparatively narrow scope for individual exertion in our northern capital. At that time, however, I knew nothing personally of London and its illimitable field of operation. The best had to be made of what was within reach. Fortunately, I continued still to have no acquaintances whom it was necessary to consult—had no giddy companions, who would have been ready enough to jeer me out of schemes of humble self-reliance. I had no dread of losing caste, because I had no artificial position to lose; and as for losing self-respect, that entirely depends on conduct and the motives by which it is influenced. It will be seen that I was not without the kind of ambition which is indispensable to success. On that very account, I treated all immediate difficulties, or humiliations, as of no moment.

Circumstances concurred to get me over the first step, which is always the most difficult. The success of my brother in his enterprise pointed out a line of business that might with advantage be followed. As Leith Walk happens to be identified in an amusing way with his as well as my own early career, I may say a few words respecting it, although at the risk of telling what may be generally known.

Leith Walk may be described as a broad kind of Boulevard, stretching nearly a mile in length between Edinburgh and the seaport, and as being constantly used as a thoroughfare by merchants, clerks, strangers, and seafaring people. In the early years of the present century, it was the daily resort of a multiplicity of odd-looking dependents on public charity—such as old blind fiddlers, seated by the wayside; sailors deficient in a leg or an arm, with long queues hanging down their backs, who were always singing ballads about sea-fights; and cripples of various sorts, who contrived to move along in wooden bowls, or in low-wheeled vehicles drawn by dogs—all which personages reckoned on reaping a harvest of coppers in the week of Leith races—that great annual festival of the gamins of Edinburgh, which has been commemorated in the humorous verses of Robert Fergusson. Besides its hosts of mendicants, the Walk was garnished with small shops for the sale of shells, corals, and other foreign curiosities. It was also provided with a number of petty public-houses; but its greatest attraction was a show of wax-work, at the entrance of which sat the figure of an old gentleman in a court-dress, intently reading a newspaper, which, without turning over the leaves, had occupied him for the last ten years.

The oddest thing about the Walk, however, was an air of pretension singularly inconsistent with the reality. The signboards offered a study of the definite article—*The* Comb Manufactory, *The* Chair Manufactory, *The* Marble Work, and so forth, appearing on the fronts of buildings of the most trumpery character. At the time I became acquainted with the Walk, it owned few edifices that were much worth. Here and there, with

intervening patches of nursery-grounds and gardens, there was a detached villa or a row of houses with flower-plots in front. But the majority of the buildings were of a slight fabric of brick and plaster, with tiled roofs, as if the whole were removable at a day's notice. There being no edifices, however mean and inconvenient, which do not find inhabitants, these frail tenements were in demand by a needy order of occupants, whose ultimate limit in the article of rent was ten to twelve pounds a year—fifteen a little beyond the thing —twenty not to be thought of.

It was one of these temporary and unattractive buildings situated, as has been said, opposite Pilrig Avenue, that had been rented by my brother, and it was there I joined him in housekeeping, with nothing to keep but the disconsolate walls and about ten shillings worth of furniture, and at first, as has been said, scarcely a bed to lie on. In 1819, Robert had to quit, in consequence of the proprietor making repairs on the row of buildings, and he removed farther down the Walk, to the street-floor of a pile of buildings of a superior class, with families of a respectable kind dwelling in the floors above.

The alterations on Giles's Buildings, as they were called, which Robert had quitted, were just completed when I stood in need of some place where I could make my first venture in business. Such a place I found almost on the spot my brother had vacated. It was on the east side of the Walk, immediately opposite the avenue to Pilrig House, a fine double row of old trees now superseded by a street. The changes that had been effected partook of the usual character of the neighbourhood—shabby pretension. The proprietor, a

builder in Edinburgh, had accumulated a number of old shop-doors and windows, which, dismissed as unfashionable and out of date, suited the locality, and gave a genteel finish to the new fronts that were stuck up along the row of mean brick edifices. Here was the shop I selected—a place of very moderate dimensions, not more than twelve feet square. For it I was to pay an annual rent of ten pounds; the possibility of my paying any such sum being, I own, somewhat visionary. Hope, however, was in the ascendant.

Without stock, capital, or shop furniture, my attempt at beginning business would almost seem like trying to make something out of nothing. I admit, the problem was difficult of solution. In one respect, it was fortunate in the way of example that Robert had begun first, but in another it was a disadvantage. In setting up, he had cleared my father's house of all its old books, which, though not many in number, or of great value, still bore bulk so far, and, giving a face to things, served for a not positively bad beginning. Coming later into the field, nothing was left for me to lay hands on in the like predatory fashion. I should doubtless, as a last resource, have procured a portion of Robert's stock of books, which, in the course of a year, had increased by his industry to be worth above twenty pounds, but, by a remarkably happy turn of events, I did not need to encroach on his painfully accumulated property.

During the first week of my freedom, there arrived in Edinburgh a travelling agent for an enterprising publisher in London. He had come to exhibit to the Scottish booksellers specimens of cheap editions of standard and popular works. Until within a short time previously, editions of the works of Johnson, Gibbon,

Robertson, Blair, Hume and Smollett, Burns, and other standard writers, had been a monopoly of certain publishers, who united to publish them, and gave them the imposing name of 'Trade Editions.' Long out of copyright, these works were public property, and could legally be printed and issued by any one, but not until now had any one had the audacity and enterprise to disregard the assumed etiquette of the profession, and print and sell editions on his own account. In daring to break down this monopoly, the publisher I refer to encountered some abuse, which, however, did not deter him in his operations. His editions, as a rule, were not so highly finished as those issued under the auspices of the trade; but as they were sold at about half the price, they were correspondingly appreciated by that portion of the book-buying world who are not scrupulously nice as to typographical elegance.

This active personage (Mr Thomas Tegg, Cheapside) had another and quite as successful a branch of business. It consisted in purchasing, wholesale, the remainders of editions which hung on the hands of publishers, and of issuing copies at a cheap price under new attractions, such as a portrait frontispiece and a fresh exterior, by which means two important ends were served—the shelves of the publishers were relieved of much dead stock, and the public were satisfied.

It was Richard Griffin, the agent of this tradesman, who, by a singular accident, fell in my way. In concluding his business tour, he had arrived in Edinburgh to hold a trade-sale previous to proceeding to London. A trade-sale, as it may be known, comprehends a dinner at some noted tavern. A large number of booksellers are invited to attend, and immediately after the cloth

is withdrawn, and the wine decanters put in circulation, the sale begins. All the guests are provided with catalogues of the books for disposal, and as each work is offered in turn at a specified price, copies are handed about as specimens. The inducement to make purchases is a certain reduction on the ordinary allowance, and, in addition, thirteen copies are usually given for the price of twelve. At the period to which I am referring, trade-sales of this festive description were more common than they are in these sober-minded days, and at them such large quantities of books were ordinarily disposed of, that the seller, who acted as host, and sat at the top of the table, did not find occasion to grudge the expense of the entertainment. The business was conducted with a blending of fun and conviviality. There was occasionally a toast, with the honours, as an interlude, and it was not unusual for one or two of the guests to be called on for a song.

The sale on the present occasion took place in the Lord Nelson Hotel, Adam Square. Mr Griffin requiring some one acquainted with the handling and arranging of books, previous to the dinner, heard of me from a bookseller as being unemployed and likely to suit his purpose. I agreed to assist him as far as was in my power, and did so without any notion of requital.

The trade-sale was well attended, and went off with uncommon *éclat*. Mr Robert Miller, of Manners and Miller, told his drollest anecdotes, whistled tunes with the delicacy of a flageolet, and sung his best songs as few men can sing them. There was a large sale effected; for it was the first time that a variety of standard works had been offered at considerably reduced prices. On the day succeeding this bibliopolic festival, I attended

to assist in packing up, in the course of which I was questioned regarding my plans. I stated to the friendly inquirer that I was about to begin business, but that I had no money; if I had, I should take the opportunity of buying a few of his specimens, for I thought I could sell them to advantage. 'Well,' he replied, 'I like that frankness; you seem an honest lad, and have been useful to me; so do not let the want of money trouble you: select, if you please, ten pounds worth of my samples, and I will let you have the usual credit.'

That was a turning-point in my life. In a strange and unforeseen manner, I was to be put in possession of a small collection of saleable books, sufficient to establish me in business. Gladly embracing the offer, I selected a parcel of books great and small, to the value of ten pounds, which I proceeded to pack into an empty tea-chest, and carry off without incurring the aid or expense of a porter. Borrowing the hotel truck, I wheeled the chest to my shop in Leith Walk; elated, it may be supposed, in no ordinary degree at this fortunate incident, and not the least afraid of turning the penny long before the day of payment came round.

Though furnished in this extraordinary manner with a stock, I was still unprovided with any kind of fixtures, such as counter or shelving. But this deficiency gave me little concern. It was not my design to sell books inside a shop. That, I knew, would never do. My plan, like that of my brother, and also many illustrious predecessors, was to expose my wares on a stall outside the door. I had years previously read the Autobiography of James Lackington, who mentions that he began business as a bookseller in 1774, the whole of his stock of old books, laid out on a stall, not amounting to

five pounds in value; that in 1792, when he retired into private life, the profits of his business amounted to £5000 a year; and that he had realised all he was possessed of, by '*small* profits, bound by *industry*, and clasped by *economy*.' I could not possibly expect to reach anything like this marvellous success of Lackington, but at anyrate there was an example offered in his small beginning, which it was my resolution to follow.

There is an old saying, that 'we should not leave till to-morrow what can be done to-day.' On this maxim, I made the improvement of 'not leaving till the next five minutes what can be done in the present,' and so hastened to get to work with as little delay as the circumstances permitted. With the five shillings which I had received as my last week's wages, I purchased a few deals at a neighbouring wood-yard, and from these, with a saw, hammer, and nails, I soon constructed all the shop furniture which I required; the most essential articles being a pair of stout trestles, on which was laid a board, whereupon to exhibit my wares to the public.

Having at length prepared everything to my mind, I was able one day, at the beginning of June, when the weather happened to be good, to commence my small business. Picture me, on a fine sunny morning, planting a pair of trestles on the broad sideway in front of my little shop, then laying on them a board; and last of all carrying out my stock of books and arranging them in three rows—the smaller ones in front, and the larger ones behind, with pamphlets embellished with plates stuck alluringly between. The whole, I fancied, made a respectable appearance, with a certain air of originality. Hitherto, the book-stalls about Edinburgh

had exhibited little else than old books, mostly purchased at the nightly auctions. The best of the stalls was one set up in the Grassmarket on Wednesdays for the market-people, and there were likewise some attractive establishments of this kind near the College and High School, with which I had early become acquainted. But, on the whole, including those on the Walk, the staple commodities were books bound in leather, which had suffered more or less from years of rough usage. Whereas, all my books being new, and done up in boards with white back-titles, as was then the prevailing fashion, their appearance was suggestive of tempting bargains.

Like an angler who eagerly watches his bait, I am to be supposed as waiting patiently at my door ready to be spoken to by intending purchasers—not obtrusively so, for fear of scaring away the timid; just hanging about in an easy indifferent sort of way, within hail; but nervously anxious when a passenger, after glancing cogitatingly over my wares, took heart to ask the price of any book that happened to strike his fancy. I entertain a pleasant recollection of my first business transaction. It was the sale of a copy of Robertson's *History of Charles V.*, in five volumes duodecimo, a rather neat but not fine edition of the work. At night, I carried it home to the purchaser. My other sales during the day were of less moment. They consisted of a copy of Hervey's *Meditations* and a sixpenny song-book. Altogether, I cleared a profit of nine shillings and threepence the first day, which put me in high spirits, notwithstanding some exhaustion of stomach; for I had been too anxious to think about any regular dinner, and contented myself with a little bread and

milk. In this self-sacrificing assiduity, however, I claim no special merit. It is what every youth who has to win his way can do if he likes.

Daily, the contents of the stall disappeared, and I was able to introduce variety by buying parcels of books at Carfrae's, which I regularly attended with my brother. At this evening auction, I speedily became known to the fraternity of stall-keepers, and was graciously acknowledged by them as one of 'the trade,' in which Robert was already a recognised member. As regards the account I had incurred, I discharged it when it became due, and continued for some time to order and pay for regular supplies. I added the sale of stationery to my business, but the population around was limited, and that came to little. I felt some pleasure in keeping up a correspondence with Mr Griffin, through whose considerate kindness I had been enabled to make a commencement. Presuming on this intimacy, I requested him to purchase for me three pounds' worth of a cheap kind of flutes, which were sometimes inquired for by seafaring men. The flutes, which were procured from a maker of musical instruments in London, in due time arrived, and the sale of them helped me a little onward. Within six months, the most critical part of my struggle was over. In a small but encouraging way, I may be considered as having been fairly established.

By studying to sell cheaply, my profits in the aggregate were not great; but along with Robert, I lived frugally. Our united daily expenses in housekeeping did not exceed a shilling. For years after beginning business, the cost of my own living was limited to sixpence a day, and all that was over I laid out in adding to my stock. As my sales

were to a large extent new books in boards, I felt that the charge made for the boarding of them was an item that pressed rather heavily upon me. Why, thought I, should I not buy the books in sheets, and put them in boards myself? It is true, I had not been taught the art of bookbinding, but I had seen it executed in my frequent visits to a bookbinder's workshop, and was confident that if I had the proper apparatus I could at least put books in boards; for that was but a rudimentary department of the craft. The articles available for the purpose at length fell in my way. After this, I procured my books in sheets, which I forthwith folded, sewed, and otherwise prepared to my satisfaction, thereby saving on an average threepence to fourpence a volume, my only outlay being on the material employed; for my labour was reckoned as nothing.

In this droll scheming way, I tried to make the best of my lot. The condition of the weather was an important element of consideration. In fine days, the Walk was thronged with foot-passengers, a number of whom found some recreation in lounging for a few minutes over my stall. If there was a prospect of rain, they hurried on; and when it became determinedly wet, business was over for the day. I might as well bring in my books at once, and try to find something to do indoors. When the stall was not in operation, sales were almost at a stand-still. Hundreds, I found, as Lackington had done before me, would buy books from a stall, who would not purchase them equally cheap in a shop. The advantageous peculiarity of the stall is, that it secures those who have formed no deliberate intention to buy. Lying invitingly with their backs upward, the books on a stall solicit just as much

attention as you are pleased to give them. You may look at them, or let them alone. You may, as if by chance, take up and set down volume after volume without getting compromised. The bookseller, however, is perfectly aware of what is likely to ensue. When he observes that the lounger over his stall is not satisfied with a casual glance, but goes on examining book after book, he is pretty certain there is to be a purchase. Continued inspection excites an interest in the mind. There is perhaps no intention at first to buy, but gradually the feelings are warmed up, and it is then scarcely possible to resist asking the price of some book which more particularly strikes the fancy. Asking the price is equivalent to passing the Rubicon. After that, the desire for purchasing becomes nearly irresistible. Going into shops to buy books in cold blood is quite a different thing. Before entering, there must in general be a distinct intention to purchase.

Stall-keepers of all varieties know the value of the obtrusive principle; and it may be doubted if the modern shop system is in most cases an improvement on the old practice of exposing wares in open booths along the sides of the thoroughfare. The original *Stationarii*, who exposed their books at the gateways of universities, immediately after the invention of printing—what were they but stall-keepers? Did not also many booksellers of good repute last century set up stalls for the sale of their wares on market-days? One does not read without interest the anecdote of Michael Johnson, bookseller at Lichfield, who, being unable from illness to set up his stall as usual at Uttoxeter, requested his son Samuel to do so in his stead, which request was refused, from a feeling of false

pride; and how this act of filial disobedience, having preyed in after-life on the morbidly susceptible mind of the great lexicographer, he, by way of expiation, went to Uttoxeter on a market-day, and stood in a drenching rain on the site of his father's stall, amidst the jeering remarks of the bystanders. There is something, therefore, like a classic authority for book-stalls. They remind us of the infancy of printed literature and the usages of an olden time.

The Walk offered uncommon facilities for the traffic in which I was engaged. Long stretches of the footway from thirty to forty feet wide, admitted of stalls being set outside the doors without obstructing the thoroughfare. Some might think that they were an attraction to what was otherwise a pleasant promenade. The book-stalls were four in number—those belonging to my brother and myself, and two others. They were all situated on the shady side of the road, forming at proper distances from each other a series of literary lures, likely to be visited *en suite.* Interesting from the diversity of their wares, they to a certain extent were mutually helpful. There was nothing like a feeling of rivalry among us. Accustomed to discuss professional matters, we were able to cultivate a few jocularities as a seasoning to a too frequent dullness. We learned how to distinguish habitual nibblers, who never bought, but only gave trouble, from those on whom we could reasonably reckon for a purchase, and knew how to act accordingly. The stall offered a study of character. There was not a little perversity or stupidity to be amused with. Some stall frequenters would buy nothing but books which had been used. Defective in judgment, they could not imagine the possibility of

getting a new book as cheaply as an old one. The stall-keepers on the Walk found it necessary to humour purchasers of this sort. It was not difficult to do so; they had only to cut up the leaves, and soil the outside of a book, in order to make it thoroughly acceptable.

With all the diligence that could be exercised, there was little scope for expansion in my small trade. With every effort, time hung heavy on my hands. I fretted at inaction. To relieve the monotony of the long dull hours during bad weather, I took to copying poems and various prose trifles in a fine species of penmanship, in the hope of selling them for albums. It was assuredly a weak resource, but what could I do? If I spent days over the manufacture of a few verses, which sold for only a single shilling—it was employment—better than sitting vaguely idle.

The notion of attempting to write in a style closely resembling the delicate print-like lettering on copper-plate engravings, occurred to me two or three years previously. A retired naval officer in poor circumstances had written an account of his captivity in France during the war, and raffled it for five pounds. The penmanship was exceedingly elegant, and I felt desirous to attempt something that might prove equally tasteful. From time to time, I made attempts at imitation, but never came up to the original. I had, however, acquired a facility in the art. The work was executed with a finely pointed crow-pen on smooth paper, ruled with lines for the purpose, and cost prodigious care and patience, because any blunder would have been fatal. Occupying any spare hours when the stall could not be put out, and poring over a desk, I was able to realise a few shillings by these laborious

transcriptions. What was of much greater value, these little pieces of penmanship helped to bring me more into notice, and to procure me the friendship of some estimable persons.

A gentleman (Mr James Dallas) who happened to see one of my specimens of caligraphy, was pleased to think better of it than it deserved, and without solicitation patronised my humble business establishment. He was about to be married, and wished to procure a quantity of books of a superior kind in the finest bindings for his library. One day, he called to inquire as to the practicability of my supplying his wants. Satisfied with the information, he gave an order of such magnitude as astonished me, and raised serious doubts as to how, with my miserable resources, it was to be executed. Apprehending some difficulty on this score, he relieved all anxieties by stating that I should bring the books in parcels from time to time, and that each parcel would be paid for on delivery.

This fortunate transaction gave me a lift onward, and stimulated to new efforts. The fact that I had unexpectedly benefited in a large degree by a gentleman seeing one of my small pieces of penmanship, suggests the reflection, that in business, as in human affairs generally, incidents which are seemingly insignificant often lead to important results. Young men are apt to treat what appears a small matter with indifference, if not disdain, without being conscious that in commerce nothing is small or to be passed over as of no moment. I once heard a merchant who had risen to great wealth say, that civility in serving a woman in humble circumstances with a pennyworth of tape, had led, by a remarkable chain of circumstances, to dealings to the

extent of hundreds of pounds. In my own case, as just stated, a small piece of transcription with a crow-pen had, by an unforeseen current of events, terminated in a manner much more advantageous than I had any reason to expect.

The progress I had made during the first year rendered it expedient to procure an enlargement of my premises. This being effected, I was able to appropriate a small back-room as a dwelling, so as to be near my work—the furniture as meagre as might be, for I could not indulge in the luxury of a carpet, and was fain to enclose my bed with a drapery of brown paper in place of curtains. I was also enabled in various ways to extend my business operations, and accommodate those who did me the honour to call. Among these visitors were several literary aspirants who hung about the outskirts of society. Few are aware of the great number of poets in Scotland. Those whose names become generally known are insignificant in number to the host who are never heard of beyond the limited locality in which they move. My brother's and my own literary tastes, to say nothing of our connection with books, made us acquainted with several poets of this order. Among these, the oddest was George Galloway, an aged shoemaker, who, deserting his last, had taken to the writing of poems and dramas. His standard production was *The Battle of Luncarty*, which his admirers thought 'almost' as good as Shakspeare. William Knox, author of *The Lonely Hearth and other Poems*, was an enthusiast of a different kind, but succumbed at an early age to what were mildly termed his 'genial propensities.'

We were more happy in knowing intimately Robert Gilfillan, still a young man, writer of some pleasing and

popular Scottish songs, who had been bred in Leith as an apprentice to a grocer, and had therefore undergone that routine of duties which I had narrowly escaped. He was a person of amiable temperament, simple in his habits, with whom it was a pleasure to interchange courtesies. I may say the same of Henry Scott Riddell, who was numbered among our early friends, and has left some singularly touching lyrics and other pieces.

There was still another of these geniuses, John C. Denovan, an excitable being, who lived in a world of romance strangely at variance with his actual circumstances. I first knew Denovan when he was a porter to a tea-dealer at the foot of Leith Street Terrace, directly opposite the spot where I had been an apprentice. He was the child of misfortune. His father had procured for him the position of midshipman, in which capacity he made a single voyage and acquired notions of life at sea. Then he was somehow deserted, and left to his shifts with his mother, a poor abject being, to whom he stuck to the last. In his reduced condition, he acquitted himself honestly, but his wayward fancies did not square with the difficulties with which he had to struggle. He was always overflowing with allusions to Wordsworth, Byron, Keats, and Leigh Hunt. A little crazy on poetical subjects, he, by an easy transition, became half mad on politics, and edited a weekly periodical called *The Patriot*, which was desperately Radical in character. One of its leading articles, I remember, began with the portentous words: 'Day follows day, and chain follows chain.' Yet Denovan was a harmless creature. His poetical pieces were noticed with some approbation by Sir Walter Scott, who, while visiting Ballantyne's printing-office at Paul's Work, now and then, in a kindly way,

looked in upon him at his den in Leith Wynd, where he latterly made a livelihood by coffee-roasting, and where he died in 1827. There was a little exhilaration in having an occasional conversation on literary topics with these writers. To a higher region we did not yet aspire.

I still at odd times continued my labours with the crow-pen, but at best this was a trivial art, and I had secret yearnings to procure a press and types, in order to unite printing with my other branches of business. I partly formed this desire by having employed a printer to execute a small volume, purporting to be an account of David Ritchie, the original of the Black Dwarf, whom I had seen when a boy in Peeblesshire. The success of this enterprise, commercially, led to the conclusion that if I could print as well as write my poor productions, I might add to my available means. It would be enough if I could procure an apparatus sufficient for executing small pamphlets, and the humbler varieties of job-printing.

For some time my inquiries failed to discover what would be within the compass of my means, until at length a person who had begun business in a way not unlike my own, and constructed a press for his own use, intimated his desire of selling off, in order to remove to a distant part of the country. The whole apparatus, including some types, was to be disposed of cheaply by private bargain. The price sought could not be considered excessive. It was only three pounds. To set up as a printer on a less capital than this was surely impossible. I paid the money, and became the happy possessor. From that time, I troubled myself no more with imitative print-writing. That branch of art was

taken up and followed for a time by my brother, who so greatly excelled in it as to leave my efforts far behind.

I hesitate to think that I acted properly in directing my mind towards letterpress printing, while deficient in capital to pursue the profession with any solid advantage. My best excuse was the wish to occupy idle time. In the mornings when the sun was up, I endeavoured to make use of the daylight by reading and study, as I had done formerly. Perusing the *Spectator*, I carefully scrutinised the papers of Addison and other writers, sentence by sentence, in order to familiarise myself with their method of construction and treatment. But beyond this I had little patience. I felt that the time had come for action, and that every hour spent in doing nothing was so much time wasted. Yet, with every excuse, I have never ceased to be amazed at my presumption in trying, without any knowledge of the typographic art, to set up with such miserable mechanical appliances. Nothing more primitive had been attempted since Guttenberg made his rudimentary efforts in the art of printing.

At the risk of being tiresome, let me endeavour to give an idea of this wonderful apparatus. The press, which was constructed to stand on a table, consisted of a wooden sole, with a carriage, on which the form of types was to be laid; and this carriage, or movable part, required to be pushed forward and drawn out as you would push and draw out a drawer. The power consisted of an iron screw hung on a cross beam, sustained by two upright supports. The handle was attached to the upper and projecting end of the screw, and had to be turned about twice with a smart jerk before the pressure could be effected. The working

of the machine was slow and imperfect. Owing to the unsteadiness of the structure, the impression was far from perfect. The extent of the pressing surface was eighteen inches by twelve, equal to four octavo pages. When the screw was brought to the pull, a jangling and creaking noise was produced, like a shriek of anguish, that might have been heard two houses off. The impression being so effected, the screw had to be whisked back to a state of repose. I had no table on which to fix this frail machine, and placed it on a stout wooden chest turned on its side, which in former and more prosperous days had been used in my father's house as a 'meal-ark.'

As regards my fount of types, it consisted of about thirty pounds-weight of brevier, dreadfully old and worn, having been employed for years in the printing of a newspaper, and, in point of fact, only worth its value as metal. Along with the fount, I had a pair of cases, in which the letters were assorted. My bargain did not embrace a frame or stand for the cases. That I supplied by the ordinary resource of wood bought from a timber-yard, and the application of my carpenter's tools. For a small additional outlay, I procured a brass composing-stick, some quoins and other pieces of furniture, an iron chess, and a roller, along with a pound-weight of printing-ink. I was now complete.

As soon as I had arranged all parts of my apparatus, I looked abroad over the field of literature to see which work should first engage my attention. My best plan, as I thought, would be to begin by printing a small volume on speculation; sell the copies, and with the proceeds buy a variety of types for executing casual jobs which might drop in. A small volume I must print,

and finish in a marketable style, that is clear, in order to raise funds. Fixed in this notion, I selected for my first venture a pocket edition of the songs of Robert Burns. This speculation was suggested by the fact that a small-sized edition of these popular songs, executed by an Edinburgh printer, had sold remarkably well on the stalls, and had already become scarce. There was room, I thought, for a little book of the kind. I accordingly commenced to set up a volume of a similar size; going to work on the songs of our national bard with all the enthusiasm which these beautiful lyrics are calculated to inspire—the very pleasure I experienced in setting up song after song being a little detrimental, for I hung delightedly over the verses, and could not help singing them as I went on with the manual operations.

I had never been taught the art of the compositor; but just as I had casually gleaned some knowledge of bookbinding, so I had picked up the method of setting types. When an apprentice, I had been frequently sent errands to the printing-office of Mr Ruthven, in Merchant's Court; the premises which, two centuries previously, had formed the town mansion of Thomas Hamilton, first Earl of Haddington, jocosely styled by James VI. 'Tam o' the Cowgate.' In the fine old dining-hall where 'Tam' had entertained royalty, I was, while waiting for proofs, favoured with an opportunity of seeing the compositors pursue their ingenious art, and learning how types were arranged in lines and pages. Recollections of what I had thus seen of compositorship were now revived, and I began to set up my song-book without receiving any special instruction; my composing-frame being placed in such a situation that I was ready to attend to other matters of business. While

so occupied, I was visited by my old friend James King, whom I had for some time lost sight of. His taste for chemistry had brought him into the employment of a glass-manufacturer; and now, in connection with that line of business, he was about to sail for Australia, where a useful career was before him. He was amused with, and, I think, compassionated, my feeble efforts. We parted—not to meet until both were in different circumstances, many years afterwards.

My progress in compositorship was at first slow. I had to feel my way. A defective adjustment of the lines to a uniform degree of tightness was my greatest trouble, but this was got over. The art of working my press had next to be acquired, and in this there was no difficulty. After an interval of fifty years, I recollect the delight I experienced in working off my first impression; the pleasure since of seeing hundreds of thousands of sheets pouring from machines in which I claim an interest being nothing to it! If the young and thoughtless could only be made to know this—the happiness, the dignity of honest labour conducted in a spirit of self-reliance—the insignificance and probably temporary character of untoward circumstances while there is youth, along with a willing heart—the proud satisfaction of acquiring by persevering industry instead of by compassionate donation—how differently would they act!

I think there was a degree of infatuation in my attachment to that jangling, creaking, wheezing little press. Placed at the only window in my apartment, within a few feet of my bed, I could see its outlines in the silvery moonlight when I awoke; and there, at the glowing dawn did its figure assume distinct proportions. When daylight came fully in, it was impossible to resist

the desire to rise and have an hour or two of exercise at the little machine.

With an imperfect apparatus, the execution of my song-book was far from good. Still, it was legible in the old ballad and chap-book style, and I was obliged to be content. Little by little, I got through the small volume. It was a tedious drudgery. With my limited fount, I could set up no more than eight small pages, forming the eighth part of a sheet. After printing the first eight, I had to distribute the letter and set up the second eight, and so on throughout a hundred pages. Months were consumed in the operation. The number of copies printed was seven hundred and fifty, to effect which I had to pull the press many thousand times. But labour, as already hinted, cost nothing. I set the types in the intervals of business, particularly during wet weather, when the stall could not be put out, and the press-work was executed late at night or early in the morning. The only outlay worth speaking of for the little volume was that incurred for paper, which I was unable to purchase in greater quantities than a few quires at a time, and therefore at a considerable disadvantage in price, but this was only another exemplification of the old and too well-known truth, that 'the destruction of the poor is their poverty,' about which it was useless to repine.

When completed, the volume needed some species of embellishment, and fortune helped me at this conjuncture. There dwelt in the neighbourhood a poor but ingenious man, advanced in life, named Peter Fyfe, with whom I had already had some dealings. Peter—a short man, in a second-hand suit of black clothes, and wearing a white neckcloth, which he arranged in loose

folds so as effectually to cover the breast of his shirt—was from the west country. He had been a weaver's reed-maker in Paisley, but having been unfortunate in business, he had migrated to Edinburgh, in the hope of procuring some kind of employment. Necessitous and clever, with an inexhaustible fund of humour, he was ready for anything artistic that might come in his way. Peter did not want confidence. I am not aware of any department in the fine or useful arts of which he would have confessed himself ignorant. At this period, when few knew anything of lithography, and he knew nothing at all, he courageously undertook, in answer to an advertisement, to organise and manage a concern of that kind, and by tact and intuition gave unqualified satisfaction. Peter was just the man I wanted. Although altogether unacquainted with copperplate engraving, he executed, from the descriptions I gave him, a portrait of the Black Dwarf, for my account of that singular personage—which sketch has ever since been accepted as an authority.

I now applied to this genius for a wood-engraving for my song-book, which he successfully produced, and for a few shillings additional, he executed a vignette representing some national emblems. Invested with these attractions, the song-book was soon put in boards, and otherwise prepared for disposal. I sold the whole either in single copies at a shilling, or wholesale to other stall-keepers at a proper reduction, and, after paying all expenses, cleared about nine pounds by the transaction.

Nine pounds was not a large sum, but it served an important end. I was able to make some additions to my scanty stock of types, which I procured from an aged printer with a decaying business. To be prepared for

executing posting-bills, I cut a variety of letters in wood with a chisel and pen-knife. For such bold headings, therefore, as 'Notice,' 'Found,' or 'Dog Lost,' I was put to no straits worth mentioning. One of my most successful speculations was the cutting in wood of the words 'To Let,' in letters four inches long, an edition of which I disposed of by the hundred at an enormous profit, to dealers who sold such things to stick on the fronts of houses to be let.

Since the acquisition of a back-room, I lived entirely by myself. The few articles of furniture with which my dwelling was provided required no special care. Like Robinson Crusoe, I contrived to live without any personal assistance; but from previous experience, this did not involve any sacrifice. I continued to live on the plainest fare; used no tobacco, and never tasted beer, wine, or spirits; nor did I feel the want of these articles. There was no doubt a certain air of vacuity about my poor domicile, but it was scrupulously clean and orderly; and, at all events, there was nobody to find fault with it. There was one unpleasant drawback in domestic arrangements. No water could be procured except from a cart laden with a barrel from St Margaret's Well, which passed along the Walk every morning, the driver blowing a long tin horn to give note of his approach. The water was sold at a halfpenny the pitcher. As may be supposed, I was my own water-carrier. My brother, with whom I had some pleasant consultations every evening, on business and other affairs, lived precisely as I did, in his separate dwelling.

With enlarged accommodation, I commenced to keep a circulating library, which, owing to the frequent issues of the Waverley Novels, was tolerably successful. My

first counter, which consisted of some rudely put together deals, pasted over with pink blotting-paper, to give it a look of mahogany, was now dismissed with thanks for its services, and was replaced by a counter of a more substantial and respectable character, which I purchased for twenty shillings at a sale of effects. About the same time, I bought a second-hand sign-board of considerable dimensions. It had belonged to a vintner, and required to be painted anew. This I effected at a very small cost—little more than eighteen-pence. My practice in writing letters to resemble print rendered the painting a matter of no difficulty; accordingly, with some oil-paint and brushes procured for the purpose, I painted the sign-board in well-defined letters in chrome yellow on a black ground. With a presumption characteristic of the Walk, the inscription announced that I was a 'Bookseller and Printer,' and with this bold intimation, the huge sign-board was hoisted to the tiled roof which covered my small establishment. A great step in advance this. On the whole, things were looking up.

All young men entering business are, I suppose, haunted by advisers and gossips, who, leading an idle kind of life, are glad to kill time in any quarter they get encouragement. Loungers of this class were inclined to honour me with their company, but I was too busy and too anxious to make use of every moment of time to greatly cultivate their acquaintance. Among them, there was the aged military pensioner who pops about, and has reminiscences of Walcheren; the decayed ship-captain, who, after being some time in the Oporto trade, has for the last five years been ineffectually trying to get a post as harbour-master; the broken-down merchant, who lives

across the way (in dependence on his sons), and who, being a determined humorist, has a faculty for making satirical remarks on the by-passers. I can recollect that one of this host of idlers was a habitual grumbler, who, alarmed at the political aspect of affairs, prognosticated the certain and speedy ruin of the country, and earnestly and confidentially advised me to emigrate to Illinois, or anywhere. I knew better than to apprehend national ruin—and stuck on.

Through the agency of book-hawkers who purchased quantities of my Burns's Songs, I procured some orders for printing 'Rules' for Friendly and Burial Societies. These answered me very well. The Rules were executed in my old brevier, leaded, on the face of half a sheet of foolscap, and were therefore within the capacity of my fount. A person who was a lessee of several toll-bars in the neighbourhood of the city, found me out as a cheap printer, and gave me a job in printing toll-tickets, which I executed to his satisfaction. Another piece of work of a similar character which came in my way was the printing of tickets for pawnbrokers. My principal employer in this line was a lady whose establishment was a second floor in High Street. She was a short, plump, laughing, good-natured woman, turned of fifty years of age. Her family consisted of a niece, who attended to business, and an aged female domestic, who went by the name of 'Pawkie Macgouggy.' Pawkie, who had been a servant in the family for upwards of twenty years, received me when I called with a package of tickets, and kindly gave me a seat in the kitchen till her mistress could be communicated with.

The lady was so obliging as to shew me some

politeness, and then, as well as a few years later, I learned a part of her history. She had travelled abroad, and brought with her to Edinburgh a knowledge of continental cookery. With this useful acquirement, she set up a tavern business in South Bridge Street, and there she laid the foundation of her fortune by a dexterous hit in the culinary art. This consisted in the invention of a savoury dish possessing an odour which, it was said, no human being could resist. To this marvellously fascinating dish she gave the name of Golli-Gosperado. The way she attracted customers was ingenious. Her tavern was down a stair, and was lighted by windows to the street, protected by iron gratings, over which the passengers walked. Having prepared her Golli-Gosperado, she put a smoking dish of it underneath the gratings in the pavement. According to her own account, the odour was overpowering. Gentlemen in passing were instantly riveted to the spot. They declared they must have some of that astonishing dish, whatever it was, and at whatever cost, and down-stairs they rushed accordingly. For a time, there was quite a furor in the town about the Golli-Gosperado. The happy inventor retired from the trade with so much money that she was able to set up as a pawnbroker. In that profession she was likewise successful, and ultimately retired altogether from business to a villa in the neighbourhood, where she died, being attended in her last moments by the faithful and sorrowing Pawkie Macgouggy.

A still better order than a batch of pawn-tickets awaited me. A draper on a considerable scale, who had known my father when in business, and sympathised in his misfortunes, having learned that I was carrying

on a small printing trade, one day sent for me. On calling, I was introduced to this worthy old citizen (John Clapperton)—a small-sized man of advanced age, wearing hair-powder. After a little conversation regarding my prospects, he gave me an order to execute 10,000 shop-bills, bearing at the top the words, in large Italics, *Fresh and Cheap.* It was imperative that there should be no alteration in the typography. For many years, the bill had been distinguished by *Fresh and Cheap*, in this style of letter, and I must on no account make any change. I undertook the job on these conditions. Before returning home, I went to my friend the old printer, and bought the types of *Fresh and Cheap* for a shilling. An ordinary printer would have set up four sets of type, and executed the four together, which for 10,000 copies would have required only 2500 pulls. Having only one *Fresh and Cheap*, and no great stock of letter otherwise, I threw off only one at a time, and therefore had to pull the whole 10,000 in separate impressions. I look back with satisfaction to having carried home my work in bundles, and in receiving payment from the venerable head of the firm. He dismissed me with a few complimentary remarks, stating that there would be no fear of me if I kept steady and clear of debt. Kindly words of this kind from a man who had himself surmounted early difficulties, helped to fortify my resolution. I could not see into the future, but it was obvious there were principles by which alone I could reckon on any chance of success.

My means being somewhat improved, it did not appear unreasonable that I should enlarge my stock of letter, by ordering a moderate fount of longprimer adapted for pamphlet-work, from an aged type-founder,

named Matthewson, who carried on business at St Leonard's, and with whom I had become acquainted. In his walks, he occasionally called to rest in passing, and hence our business dealings. His cut of letter was not particularly handsome, but in the decline of life and in easy circumstances, he did not care for new fashions.

Disposed to be familiar, Matthewson gave me an outline of his history. He had, he said, been originally a shepherd boy, but from his earliest years had possessed a taste for carving letters and figures. One day, while attending his master's sheep, he was accidentally observed by the minister of the parish to be carving some words on a block of wood with a pocket-knife. The clergyman was so pleased with his ingenuity, that he interested himself in his fate, and sent him to Edinburgh to pursue the profession of a printer. Shortly afterwards, he began to make himself useful by cutting dies for letters of a particular description required by his employer; there being then no typefounder in the city. While so occupied, he attracted the notice of Benjamin Franklin on his second visit to Scotland. This was about 1771. Franklin was pleased with the skill of the young printer, and offered to take him to Philadelphia, and there assist him in establishing a letter-foundry. Matthewson was grateful for the disinterested offer, of which, unfortunately, for family reasons, he could not take advantage. He set up the business of letter-founding in Edinburgh, which he had all to himself until the commencement of establishments with higher claims to taste in execution.

To vary the monotony of my occupation, I had for some time been making efforts at literary composition. It was little I dared to attempt in that way, for anxiety

concerning ways and means impelled me to disregard every species of employment that partook of recreation, or which was not immediately advantageous. With a view to publication at the first favourable opportunity, I wrote an account of the Scottish Gipsies, for which I drew on my recollection of that picturesque order of vagrants in the south of Scotland, and also the traditions I had heard regarding them. It was a trifle—nothing worth speaking of; but being now provided with a tolerably good fount of longprimer, also some new brevier suitable for foot-notes, I thought it might be made available. I accordingly set up the tract as a sixpenny pamphlet; and for this small brochure a coarse copper-plate engraving was furnished by that versatile genius, Peter Fyfe. It represented a savage gipsy-fight at a place called Lowrie's Den, on the top of Soutra Hill. The edition was sold rapidly off, and I cleared a few pounds by the adventure. What was of greater service, I felt encouraged to put my thoughts on paper, and to endeavour to study correctness and fluency of expression. The tract on the Gipsies also procured me the acquaintance of a few persons interested in that wayward class of the community.

My enlarged typographical capabilities led to new aspirations. Robert, who had made corresponding advances in business, but exclusively in connection with bookselling, was occupying his leisure hours in literary composition, which came upon him like an inspiration at nineteen years of age. His tastes and powers in this respect suggested the idea of a small periodical which we might mutually undertake. He was to be the editor and principal writer. I was to be the printer and publisher, and also to contribute articles as far as time permitted.

The periodical was duly announced in a limited way, and commenced. A name was adopted from the optical toy invented by Sir David Brewster, about which all classes were for a time nearly crazy. It was called the *Kaleidoscope, or Edinburgh Literary Amusement.* In size, it was sixteen pages octavo—the price threepence —and it was to appear once a fortnight. The first number was issued on Saturday, October 6, 1821. The mechanical execution of this literary serial sorely tested the powers of my poor little press, which received sundry claspings of iron to strengthen it for the unexpected duty. My muscular powers likewise underwent a trial. I had to print the sheet in halves, one after the other, and then stitch the two together. I set all the types, and worked off all the copies, my younger brother James, a fair-haired lad, rolling on the ink, and otherwise rendering assistance.

This was the hardest task I had yet undergone; for, being pressed by time, there was no opportunity for rest. Occupied with business, the composing-frame, and the press, also with some literary composition, I was in harness sixteen hours a day; took no more than a quarter of an hour to meals; and never gave over work till midnight. Sometimes I had dreadful headaches. Of course, I do not justify this excessive application. It was clearly wrong. I was acting in violation of the laws of health. Enthusiasm alone kept me up—certainly no material stimulus. My only excuse for this ardently pursued labour, which must have been troublesome to quietly disposed neighbours, was what at the same period might have been offered by my brother for his incessant self-sacrificing exertions—a desire to overcome a condition that provoked the most stinging recollections.

I should probably have broken down but for the weekly repose and fresh air of Sunday, when, after attending church, I had an exhilarating ramble on the sands and links.

Robert wrote nearly the whole of the articles in the *Kaleidoscope*, verse as well as prose. My contributions consisted of only three or four papers. The general tone of the articles, by whomsoever produced, may be acknowledged to have been unnecessarily caustic and satirical. There was also a certain crudeness of ideas, such as might be expected from young and wholly inexperienced writers. Nevertheless, there was that in the *Kaleidoscope* which was indicative of Robert's future skill as an essayist; for here might be found some of the fancies which were afterwards developed in his more successful class of articles. In particular, may be mentioned the paper styled the 'Thermometer of Misfortune,' in which occur the ideas that were in after-years expanded into the essay on the luckless class of intemperates popularly known as 'Victims.'

This little periodical also contained a few articles descriptive of a wayward class of authors in the lower walks of life, written from personal knowledge, and marked by that sympathy for the unfortunate which characterised my brother through life. I feel tempted to give one of these sketches. It refers to Stewart Lewis, a hapless being with whom Robert had become acquainted, when he himself was in straits previous to commencing his small business.

STEWART LEWIS.

'It was towards the end of 1816, when I lived in a cottage on one of the great roads which lead to this metropolis,

that I was engaged in a mercantile concern in the city, and travelled thither every morning, and after the duties of the day were performed, came back in the evening. I was one evening, after my return, entertained by my mother with an account of two extraordinary persons, who had called during my absence; and who afterwards proved to be Stewart Lewis and his wife, travelling on an expedition to Haddington, selling a small volume of poems which he had just published.

'The appearance and singular manners of these visitants were described to me in such terms of respect, as made me regret my absence when they called; and the volume of poems which they had left, increased my desire to see their author: for the acquaintance of a poet, and one who had actually printed his productions, was at that time an object of very great interest, and even curiosity.

'On the very next evening, however, my curiosity was destined to be gratified, for who should drop in upon us but poor Lewis with his wife! They had, to use the wife's expression, "never been off their feet" since early in the morning, and were very much fatigued accordingly. I was then introduced to the poet; and in the course of five minutes, we were engaged in as sincere a friendship as if we had lived together from infancy. Whether it was from the naturally ardent enthusiasm of his temper, or a secret instinctive discovery that I was afterwards to become one of his own brotherhood, I will not, cannot, determine. From what I can recollect of his appearance and countenance, he was dressed in a suit of shabby clothes, mostly of a gray colour; his person was slender; his face interesting, and bearing peculiar marks of genius and intelligence; his forehead was high, his hair gray and thin, and he had a countenance wrinkled with care, and squalid with poverty. He never spoke but under the influence of a sort of furor; and he even did not return thanks for the favour of another cup of tea without an excitation of feeling and expression, which had in it something of poetic fervour.

'His wife was a little old woman, with no remains of that beauty which had captivated the high-toned heart of Stewart Lewis thirty years before. He had thus addressed her, on the thirtieth anniversary of their marriage :

"Though roses now have left thy cheek,
And dimples now in vain I seek ;
Thy placid brow, so mild and meek,
Proclaims I still should love thee.

How changed the scene since that blest day !
My hair 's now thin and silver gray ;—
Though all that 's mortal soon decay,
My soul shall live to love thee."

She spoke in a low querulous voice, subdued in its tones by a long course of misery. They addressed each other by terms of endearment as strong, and spoke with as great an affection, as they had done on their marriage day. An instance of conjugal attachment has seldom been found like that of Stewart Lewis and his sorrow-broken spouse. He had addressed several poems to her, even in her old age, some of which are eminently beautiful, and breathe the spirit of as fond an affection as if they had still been the accents of a first love, unbroken and unproved.

'They were much fatigued when they arrived ; but a refreshment of tea soon revived their spirits ; and though the success of their journey had been very limited, the poor bard was soon elevated to a state of rapturous excitement ; while yet in the intervals of his joy, the wife, who had less of a poetic temperament, and whom misfortune had taught the very habit of sorrow, would interfere, with a voice mournfully soothing, and warn him of his inevitable griefs to-morrow.

'After this, we had frequent visits of Stewart Lewis ; but as these were generally through the day, when I was engaged in the duties of my profession, I had little opportunity of seeing him. He had left several copies of his poems with us ; and I afterwards succeeded in disposing of a few to the

most poetical of the neighbourhood, which raised a small sum. I then resolved to pay him a visit. My father accompanied me in this adventure, out of curiosity to see his dwelling. After searching all the closes at the west end of the Cowgate for his habitation, we were at length directed to it by an old woman, who appeared like a corpse from the grave, rising out of a low cellar in a very dark close—such a pallid and wrinkled crone as I have seen full oft in my antiquarian researches through the ancient lanes of the town, emerging from her dark dungeon at mid-day to taste one breath of a somewhat purer atmosphere than that of her own subterranean domicile. With her shrivelled arm she pointed up a narrow crazy stair which winded above her head, and told us that the object of our search lived there. We thanked her, and ascended. At the second landing-place, we entered a dark narrow passage, from which a number of doors seemed to diverge, the habitations of miserables, and in one of which dwelt Stewart Lewis.

'On entering this wretched abode, we found the unfortunate bard, with his son, a lad of seventeen, sitting at a table, and employed in stitching up various copies of his poems in blue paper covers. At our entrance, he started up with an exclamation of surprise, and welcomed us to his humble shed. I perceived, however, that his countenance presently lost that bold smile of welcome, and his tongue that vehement gush of poetical, enthusiastic language, habitual to him in even the lowest occurrences of common life; while his mind seemed engaged in recollecting whether there was anything in the house with which he might entertain us. I soon eased him of his fear on that account, by laying in his hand the small sum which I had collected for his benefit from the sale of his poems. His face immediately assumed its former smile, and after thanking me, he sent away his son with two-thirds of the money to purchase whiskey—an act of improvident extravagance which I could not help condemning with perhaps too great vehemence for a guest. He did not seem offended by my remonstrances. It was obvious, however,

that the cause of his miserable and hopeless condition had been disclosed.

'After this interview, I never saw Stewart Lewis more. His wife died shortly after, and he came to my father's house in my absence, in a state of distraction for his loss. He waited many hours for my return, but at last went away without seeing me. The depth of his sorrow was intimated to me in a way perhaps more affecting than any personal interview might have been. He left a letter, in which was written, in a hand which I could scarcely decipher, and in characters which strayed over the whole page :

"My dear Sir,

I am mad.

Stewart Lewis."

'The affection which this poor man entertained for the benign being who, for upwards of thirty years, had shared with him a constant train of sorrow and poverty without ever repining, had in it something truly romantic. She was the first and only woman he had ever loved, and he always declared that he could not survive her loss. Their love was mutual, and her devotion to him had been often shewn by more substantial proofs than words.

'She had frequently, even when they were in a state of starvation, worked a whole day at some coarse millinery work to earn a sixpence, that she might, with mistaken kindness, supply her husband with spirits. The unfortunate habit of drinking intoxicating liquors, which he had acquired after an early disappointment in life, never afterwards left him ; and whether to drown reflections on his own misery and blasted prospects, or to inspire him with the faculty of versification, he found the indulgence of that propensity, as he imagined, necessary to his existence. But never was the brow of this woman clouded with a reproof of the cause of all her sorrows, and a word of remonstrance against his foibles was never heard to escape her lips. He has commemorated his unutterable affection in several beautiful

songs. In one, which he calls his "Address to his Wife," I find the following pathetic verses :

"In youthful life's ecstatic days,
I 've rapt'rous kissed thae lips o' thine ;
And fondly yet, with joy I gaze
On thee, auld canty wife o' mine.

When fortune's adverse winds did blaw,
And maist my senses I wad tine,
Thy smilin' face drove ill awa',
Thou ever dear auld wife o' mine.

Lang round the ingle's heartsome blaze,
Thy thrifty hand made a' to shine ;
Thou 'st been my comfort a' my days,
Thou carefu' dear auld wife o' mine.

When life must leave our hoary head,
Our genial souls will still be kin',
We 'll smile and mingle wi' the dead,
Thou canty dear auld wife o' mine."

After the death of his wife, he wandered all over Scotland and the northern counties of England, reckless of his fate. He lamented her death in ceaseless complaints, and seemed careless of life. The remainder of the copies of his poems which he had left with us—a considerable number—were sent to him while he was at Inverness, and he subsisted entirely on what the sale of them provided for upwards of a twelvemonth. When weary of existence, and worn out with fatigue, he died at an obscure village in Dumfriesshire, about the end of 1818. He left three daughters, none of whom I ever saw, and one son, who had latterly been the companion of his wanderings—a youth unfortunately weak in his intellects, and of whose fate I have been able to learn nothing.'

My brother's poetical pieces were the best. Some of them were touching and beautiful, particularly the

address 'To the Evening Star,' which has been often reprinted by compilers of volumes of poetry without intimating its origin, which is not surprising, for who knows that the obscure periodical in which it first made its appearance ever existed? It may be given as a specimen of his powers of versification at nineteen years of age.

TO THE EVENING STAR.

Soft star of eve, whose trembling light
  Gleams through the closing eye of day,
Where clouds of dying purple bright
  Melt in the shades of eve away,
And mock thee with a fitful ray,
  Pure spirit of the twilight hour,
Till forth thou blazest to display
  The splendour of thy native power.

'Twas thus, when earth from chaos sprung,
  The smoke of forming worlds arose,
And, o'er thine infant beauty hung,
  Hid thee awhile in dark repose;
Till the black veil dissolved away,
  Drunk by the universal air,
And thou, sweet star, with lovely ray,
  Shone out on paradise so fair.

When the first eve the world had known
  Fell blissfully on Eden's bowers,
And earth's first love lay couched upon
  The dew of Eden's fairest flowers;
Then thy first smile in heaven was seen
  To hail the birth of love divine,
And ever since that smile hath been
  The sainted passion's hallowed shrine:
Can lover yet behold the beam
  Unmoved, unpassioned, unrefined?
While there thou shin'st the brightest gem,
  To Night's cerulean crown assigned.

Since then how many gentle eyes
That love and thy pure ray made bright,
Have gazed on thee with blissful sighs—
Now veiled in everlasting night!
Oh, let not love or youth be vain
Of present bliss, and hope more high;
The stars—the very clods remain—
Love, they, and all of theirs must die.

Now throned upon the western wave,
Thou tremblest coyly, star of love!
And dip'st beneath its gleamy heave
Thy silver foot, the bath to prove.
And though no power thy course may stay,
Which nature's changeless laws compel,
To thee a thousand hearts shall say—
Sweet star of love, farewell, farewell!

The *Kaleidoscope* did not last. It sold pretty well but only to the extent of paying expenses, yielding no reward whatever for literary effort. Yet it was not an absolutely valueless undertaking. It was a trial of one's wings, and encouraged to higher flights in more favourable times and circumstances. The concluding number appeared on 12th January 1822.

From about this time, new and enlarged views began to predominate. Through a fervid earnestness of purpose, and the endurance of privations which were never felt to be of any serious consequence, early difficulties had been successfully mastered. Three to four years of a funny, scheming, struggling, tolerably hard-working existence—to be remembered like a dream or chapter of a romance—had fulfilled every reasonable anticipation. The Walk, we thought, had fairly served its day. With sentiments somewhat akin to those of Tom Tug, in the *Waterman*, when bidding a pathetic farewell to his

'trim-built wherry,' we were disposed to bid an affecting and grateful adieu to stall and trestles, and bequeath to others the advantages, the drolleries, and classic associations of open-air traffic. Migration was accordingly resolved on, and we had sundry communings as regards where we should respectively attempt to establish ourselves in Edinburgh.

The step was adventurous, but not unjustifiable. We had, each in his own way, gained a footing, along with some experience. Robert had not been disciplined to business, as I had the fortune to be during an apprenticeship; but he was tractable, open to advice, and through sheer necessity he had allowed no opportunity to slip of improving his condition by diligent attention to details of a very humble kind. His accuracy was exemplified by punctiliously keeping a regular account of his business transactions, which has happily survived, and can be referred to as an evidence of the way in which he, little by little, accumulated means through a course of self-denial and painstaking industry. It is vastly interesting, at this distant day, to peruse the faithful record of each day's sale of a few old books, with the profit on each carefully noted, and the amount summed up at the end of the week, during a space of several years. The penmanship is neat; and the calculations are executed with a precision which might offer an example to such beginners in business as are apt to take a loose view of the relationship which should subsist between income and expenditure.

An additional interest is given to the record by the occasional entry of sums realised for 'Writing,' from a single shilling to sometimes as much as ten to twelve shillings. These entries signify that so much was gained

by executing small quantities of visiting-cards, inscriptions on books, petitions, and poetic pieces in the minute kind of caligraphy in which my brother excelled; the larger sums so specified being, of course, for what, in the intervals of ordinary business, had involved the labour of several days. The writing of 'petitions' was the most profitable of this kind of work, only it did not come very often. On one occasion, we see an entry of a pound for 'Writing a petition,' the profit on which is candidly set down at nineteen shillings and sixpence. A great day that! With such valuable extraneous aids, Robert's general earnings were raised, as he takes care to calculate by working out an arithmetical question at the end of the book, to an average of one pound eight shillings and threepence-halfpenny weekly in the first half-year of 1821.

An evidence of his painstaking assiduity at this period, or shortly afterwards, has lately been presented in a communication to a Fifeshire newspaper, which I give in an abbreviated form: 'Among the books required for a public library set on foot at Dysart, was *Travels in Italy*, by Dr John Moore, a cheap second-hand copy of which was found at the small establishment of Robert Chambers, in Leith Walk. Unfortunately, the book was incomplete. Four leaves at the centre of the volume were missing. Anxious to effect a sale, Mr Chambers engaged to complete the work. And neatly, too, he did it. With a crow pen he wrote in a manner to resemble print the missing eight pages, and rebound the book. The pages supplied by him are quite as easily read as the rest of the text, and the whole transaction offers a good example of the energy of purpose and perseverance which characterised his successful career.'

The volume which had been so ingeniously completed to render it a marketable commodity, has been kindly presented to me by the gentleman whose property it ultimately became. It may be reckoned a 'curiosity in literature.' The work of reparation must have cost several days of diligent application with the pen, while the entire price realised would at most be only two or three shillings.

In the autumn of 1822 we had both a spurt onwards from a wholly unforeseen cause, the value of which it would be difficult to estimate. The extraordinary event was the visit of George IV. to Edinburgh. How this royal excursion should in any manner have influenced the fortunes of two such humble individuals may appear unaccountable. The explanation is simple. Taking advantage of the general excitement, I worked night and day printing off broadsides, popular songs, and programmes of the royal processions, which sold immensely. Robert participated in the windfall by being employed by several public bodies to write addresses to His Majesty in the peculiarly captivating style of penmanship for which he was now in some degree celebrated, through the recommendations of Sir Walter Scott—the recognised mainspring of this exciting national saturnalia.

The explanation so far, is, no doubt, simple enough, but how did my brother, immersed in obscurity in Leith Walk, become personally known to the author of *Waverley?* That needs to be cleared up. The incident has a tinge of romance, and curiously illustrates how one thing may unexpectedly lead to another. At this time there dwelt in Leith a good-natured middle-aged man, a shipbuilder, by name Mr Alexander Sime.

He had been educated at Peebles, and retained some vivid recollections of the old burgh and its inhabitants. One of his agreeable remembrances related to the dancing-school, at which shone a pretty and lady-like girl, Jeanie Gibson, the noonday of whose married life had been clouded by a series of misfortunes in saddening contrast with the bright anticipations of her early morning; and now, as he learned, her two elder sons were pushing their way on as booksellers in Leith Walk. Sime's best feelings were interested. He made himself known to us, and a cordial intimacy ensued. Through him we became acquainted with Mr William Reid, a well-known bookseller in Leith, and a person of singularly genial disposition. Reid acted as a true friend. He occasionally looked in upon us to offer a word of advice and encouragement, and was much pleased with my brother's specimens of writing, one of which consisted of a large sheet of extracts of Sir Walter Scott's poetry. Desirous to be useful to the struggling youth, Reid carried off the specimen to shew to his friend Constable, then in the zenith of his power. This circumstance immediately led to an interview between the great publisher and my brother. The following is the account of what occurred, as given by Robert in the memoranda which have been latterly recovered:

'It was proposed that I should write something of the same kind in the shape of a volume, which I should present to Sir Walter, with a letter of introduction from the publisher. The matter proposed by Mr Constable was the songs in the *Lady of the Lake*, which he seemed to indicate as being the poet's pet compositions. In the course of a few months I had finished my little volume

with a neat title-page, and it was sent to Mr Constable at his own request, in order to be bound. It was not till February 1822 it was returned, along with the promised letter of introduction. Furnished with that document, I proceeded next day to the poet's residence in Castle Street, where I had the good-fortune to find him in his study. He received me, as he received every one who approached him, with a homely kindness of manner which at once placed me at my ease; and having had the volume in his possession for some hours, he was able to express his surprise, and also that of his wife—for so he designated Lady Scott—at the extreme neatness and minuteness of the writing. He said he would place the book in his library at Abbotsford, and he was sure it would be considered as not the least curious of the many curiosities there deposited. He then made inquiries respecting my occupations, and having been informed that I dealt partly in old books, requested that I would let him know when I happened to possess any of particular rarity or value. After some further conversation I took my leave, astonished at the gentle and easy manners of a man whom I had been accustomed to regard as a superior order of being, and delighted with the reflection that I would ever have it to say, perhaps many years after he should be dead and gone, that I had seen and talked with him.'

For Mr Constable's kindness in introducing him to Sir Walter Scott, my brother was peculiarly grateful, as may be gathered from a letter addressed to him, dated 'Leith Walk, 25th February 1821.' The letter is embraced in the interesting work on his father by Mr Thomas Constable. After some enthusiastic expressions of gratitude, he adds:

'I took the letter of introduction which you so kindly transmitted by Mr Reid, to Sir Walter Scott on Tuesday last, and was received by that gentleman in a manner so flattering, so condescending, so truly polite (and his politeness is the very essence of benevolence), that I could scarcely believe that I was the real object of so much attention, but rather that I was only acting some imaginary part in the pageant of a dream! He praised my penmanship so highly that I almost grew ashamed to hear one who is himself so far removed above all minute ingenuities become the flatterer of a merely tasteful curiosity. He had also shewn it to Lady Scott and to several of his friends, who all honoured it with the same commendation. I am now somewhat afraid that I stayed too long, for he rose first, as a signal for breaking up the interview, though I was not with him more than a quarter of an hour. I hope, however, if I have been guilty there, that really my excuse will readily be found in my only having endeavoured to take as long a draught as possible of the rich and bewitching bowl of his presence. In this interview, the enthusiastic wish of several years has been gratified—I have seen and spoken to Sir Walter Scott, and, like the comet which travels to the sun once in a thousand years, and lays in such a stock of heat and blazing glories as serves it in all its wanderings through the coldest bounds of its orbit, I have received so much reflected greatness from my own near approach to this centre of the literary system, that the experience of a century of mere common prose life could scarcely expend it.

'I hope, sir, that you will give me willing credit for my feelings when I declare that all the gratification of pride and ambition of distinction as an artist, and all the gracious circumstance of being noticed by the kindness of Sir Walter Scott, scarcely brought me half so satisfying and sincere a pleasure as the way in which my mother was elated by my honours, and participated in my feelings on the occasion. The first was a pleasure peculiarly of the soul, but this was a pleasure of the heart. Of all friends, a

mother is the most sympathising, whether in adversity or prosperity ; there is nothing could make her so happy as the honourable distinction of her son, and nothing so miserable as his debasement.'

Some few additional particulars of the acquaintanceship with Sir Walter, so begun, are gathered from a letter which Robert wrote to Thomas Scott, a humble friend, a native of Roxburghshire, who had come about him at his small place of business, and to whom he afterwards freely communicated his thoughts on literary subjects. In the letter, which is dated from '32 Leith Walk, 14th July 1822, opposite the Botanic Gardens,' to which he had lately removed in order to be nearer Edinburgh, he mentions being visited by Alexander Campbell, editor of *Albyn's Anthology*, who had called at the request of Sir Walter—perhaps not alone to pay a compliment, but to see the nature of the young bookseller's establishment. Campbell, a worthy man, seems to have been saddened with the aspect of affairs—a mean low-roofed building with a book-stall at the door ; in the meagre interior, a modest and light-haired youth, poorly clad, apparently friendless so far as any substantial benefit was concerned, diligently exerting himself to eke out a slender means of subsistence by executing a scrap of ornamental caligraphy with a crow pen, the paper being laid on a shop shutter which was propped up to answer the purpose of a desk on the small counter. The old man's feelings were touched. The ingenuous youth, so tasking himself, surely deserved something better. Looking around him, and entering into conversation, Mr Campbell ventured to hint that by a proper application to Sir Walter, my brother could easily procure a means of livelihood superior to that which he now

possessed. In a spirit of that delicacy and independence for which he was signalised, the hint was gently but firmly repudiated. He says, in describing the scene: 'I declined the well-meant proposal. I feel that degradation and misery would be preferable to demeaning myself in the eyes of so great a man. Sir Walter Scott has so many claimants on his generosity, and is troubled by so many unreasonable requests, that I, with all my necessities, would feel degraded to invite his assistance, or even to anticipate by one moment the desire he might conceive for favouring me. The thought would be truly intolerable.'

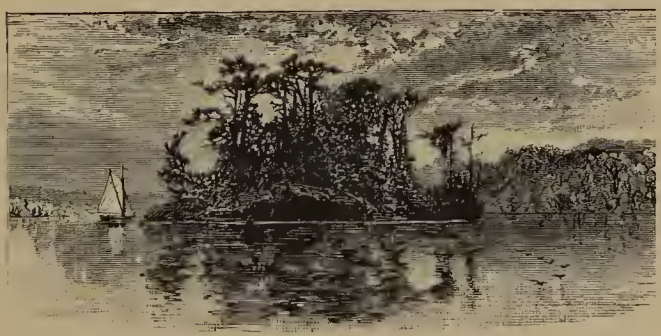
In short, Robert was resolved to fight on and trust to circumstances, in preference to putting himself in the light of a petitioner. He would drudge, labour, suffer —almost starve, as some might think—but even in the gloom which shrouded him, he was too proud to petition for special favour. He venerated Sir Walter Scott almost to adoration, but he disdained to trouble him with his necessities, or to encroach on his beneficence. What a lesson to the young, who are inconsiderately prone to be on the outlook for patrons, it may be at the sacrifice of personal independence along with a lifelong feeling of abasement! We shall see that the self-reliant policy proved quite as successful as it was commendable.

Following on the account of the interview with Campbell, Robert narrates what took place at a business mission to Sir Walter Scott, at his town residence, 39 Castle Street. 'I called,' he says, 'on Sir Walter last Wednesday, with the purpose of shewing him a few curious old books, and a catalogue of more which I happened to have the power of selling. He made an apology for never having come down the Walk to see

me as he promised; and bought the two volumes I had taken with me; besides desiring me to bring up some, which he pointed out in the list, next morning at nine o'clock. I was punctual, you may be sure, to my appointment; and had the happiness of seeing him again in his own study. I stood within two feet of a sheet of paper, which he had written about half down the page. Perhaps it was the next new novel! He bought other three volumes, giving me an excellent price. I paste a small piece of a bank-note which I got out of his own hand upon the present letter. [*Here a small triangular piece of dingy paper cut from the corner of a Scotch pound-note is stuck by wax on the letter.*] I need not tell you to regard it with veneration, and to preserve it with reverence. It would be a loss of twenty shillings to me, if I were to confer the same favour upon other thirty of my poetical, enthusiastic friends! The most important and remarkable circumstance of this interview, was Sir Walter saying very kindly: "I shall always be very happy to hear from you, Mr Chambers, and to take an interest in your welfare." After which he good-morningised me out of the room. He seems confused in speaking, and forgets by the end of a topic what he said at the beginning; as if he were fretting with impatience to get people away, and to sit down to his eternal task again. I did not see him above seven or eight minutes.'

These are trivial but not uninteresting memorials of an opening intercourse which ripened into an intimacy with the greatest of modern Scotsmen. The worst part of Robert's early struggle was about over. The dark cloud was passing away. The visit of George IV. to Edinburgh in August 1822, brought a windfall, as has

been stated, to the painstaking youth. Sir Walter Scott, remembering his ability as a penman, zealously promoted his interests in this direction. For a time, he was kept busily employed in writing addresses to the king; besides which he was commissioned by Sir Walter to transcribe into a volume, similar to the *Songs in the Lady of the Lake*, the best of the poetical effusions that had been poured out on the occasion. By these several means his position was so materially improved, that his originally small stock had now increased to be worth about two hundred pounds; and, thanks to the superhuman work at the hand-press, I had made a similar, if not greater advance. There were, accordingly, some grounds for our resolving to move a little towards the front. In 1823, my brother removed to India Place; and about the same time I removed to Broughton Street; both places, as we diffidently ventured to hope, being intermediate to something better.



CHAPTER VII.

ROBERT'S WRITINGS—1822 TO 1832.

MY brother's literary efforts had hitherto been on a limited scale. He had composed some pieces, remarkable, perhaps, for his years and the untoward circumstances in which he was placed ; but, except by a few acquaintances, none augured that he would make any progress as an author. His first production, not a very high flight, was entitled *Illustrations of the Author of Waverley*. It consisted of short sketches of several individuals, chiefly connected with the south of Scotland, popularly believed to have been the originals of characters in the earlier fictions of Sir Walter Scott, as, for example, Davie Gellatley, Dominie Sampson, Meg Merrilies, and Dandie Dinmont. The south-country people who came about us formed a convenient source of information on the subject.

As in the case of young writers with their first productions, Robert was in a difficulty about a publisher for his *Illustrations*. He or I in our humble way of business could scarcely be thought of. Interested in all we were about, and anxious for our advancement, my mother was of opinion that Mr Constable, for whom

she entertained a high opinion, should be applied to. Robert, accordingly, after having matured his plan, ventured to write to that eminent bookseller, asking his advice and assistance. The letter, dated from Leith Walk, 13th May 1822, affords a good idea of that earnestness of purpose which animated my brother at the outset of his literary career, and which indeed carried him through life. Addressing Mr Constable, he says:

'Since I concluded the long task of writing the songs in the *Lady of the Lake* which, through your kind means, I am proud to acknowledge, has turned out so happily for me, I have again resumed the literary pursuits which had been then, and frequently before, interrupted by the less favourite practice of ornamental penmanship; and have now nearly finished a work which, in my opinion, would excite a pretty high interest in the world, if ushered forth in the proper manner, which it would require either your interfering attention to assist, or your name to render respectable.

'I have myself employed much labour of research, and have engaged in the same cause many friends in the country, who have better opportunities in discovering the *originals* of characters supposed to be fictitiously described in the works of the author of *Waverley;* and I have already prepared a considerable number of notices and anecdotes of such as I have been so fortunate as to find, which are certainly of a very amusing and humorous nature. I include in the design descriptions of real scenes, manners, and incidents, introduced into these glorious productions, and historical sketches of remarkable personages, upon whose actions some of them have been so interestingly founded.

'The performance of this work I will execute with such an absolute abstraction from all catchpenny or invidious intents, that none of its information can ever at all tend to deteriorate the fame or character of our national novelist in

regard to his being an author of *purely original* conceptions, but will rather appear as a series of entertaining stories and anecdotes, which derive their chief and most immediate interest from their reference to these works, and are otherwise wholly abstract, independent, and relying on their own deserts. . . .

'I had proposed the printing of this work to my brother, who has lately, with an ingenuity that does him honour, taken up that trade at his own hand; and he so far encouraged my design as to agree to throw off a thousand copies for the consideration of a third part of the impression. But upon second, or rather I should say sixtieth thoughts, I found out that to print it at such an obscure place as Leith Walk, and to publish it at the shop of such an unheard-of bookseller as your humble servant, would be at once to stamp it with ignominy, or what is precisely the same thing, obscurity. Wherefore, I have now, by the advice of my mother—who wonders, good woman, what can have set me upon such high designs against the world—to go at once to the fountain-head of respectability, and proffer the fruits of my industry to you.

'I do not myself entertain the slightest doubt that you could bring my intentions to a profitable issue; but objections may perhaps occur to you which I am too nearly interested to observe. You may perhaps, however, be able to favour me with your advice in the affair, at all events, if with that alone I am to be content.

'You will do me infinite happiness by writing to me as soon as convenient. Should you be so kind as desire it, I can hand you a specimen of any of my manuscript immediately; and I could have the whole work ready for the press in two, or at farthest three months from this date.—In the meanwhile, I remain, sir, your most humble servant,

ROBERT CHAMBERS.'

The attempt to induce Mr Constable to launch the *Illustrations*, failed, and Robert was left no other resource

than to engage me as publisher as well as printer, and I may add bookbinder; for, after setting the types (in my best long-primer), and working off the impression, consisting of a thousand copies, I put the whole in boards with a pinkish paper cover and white back-title. The small volume was embellished with a likeness of Rob Roy, produced from a copper-plate bought cheap from an engraver. Such was my brother's first book, the *Illustrations of the Author of Waverley*. Though far from being attractive in appearance, it was well received. The copies printed were sold off to some pecuniary advantage, and the writer won that amount of reputation which encouraged him to persevere in his efforts. He had fortunately brought himself into the notice of an Edinburgh publisher, who undertook to bring out the book in better style. A second and more extended edition was therefore issued in 1824, and it helped materially to improve Robert's chances as an author. In this new edition of the *Illustrations*, the likeness of Rob Roy was dismissed; its place as a frontispiece being taken by an engraving of Sir Walter Scott, but with the face hid by a curtain—a hint as to who was the Great Unknown.

In a book which speculated on the identification of actual scenes, incidents, and characters with what had given rise to the fictions of the novelist, it would have been strange if the writer had not sometimes gone a little wide of the mark. According to the Introduction to the annotated edition of the *Monastery*, an erroneous conjecture had been hazarded respecting Captain Clutterbuck, who, not a little to the surprise of Sir Walter, was identified with a friend and neighbour of his own. Apart, however, from misapprehensions of

this kind, the *Illustrations* pointed, in a wonderfully correct manner, at the originals of some of the principal characters in the earlier novels, and contained some amusing sketches, the result of observation.

Among the persons by whom my brother was aided in gathering together materials for the *Illustrations* was Thomas Scott, already mentioned as being a native of Roxburghshire, who came about him while in Leith Walk, and to whom he afterwards wrote a number of letters, which were long fondly cherished, and have latterly and unexpectedly come into my possession. In one of these letters, dated 1820, he speaks of a widow lady and her daughters who inhabited the floor immediately over his place of business, and with whom, through kindred musical tastes, he happened to become acquainted. The young ladies, as we learn, sang and played on the pianoforte beautifully, and their singing was listened to by my brother as if coming from a choir of angels. The performances of Lilias, one of these youthful divinities—there is always *one* who reaches perfection—conveyed the most delightful sensations. When at night, he lay down in his dingy back-room, and heard the warbling of Lilias overhead, he could scarcely do less than give utterance to his feelings in a poetical effusion, a copy of which appears in his letter to Scott:

LINES ON HEARING A LADY SINGING.

When balmy sleep, in gloom of night,
  My life from all it was redeemed,
I dreamed a dream of fond delight,
  For scarce a waking bliss it seemed.
I heard a voice that softly sung
  A strain I knew, but could not name,
And aye, methought, I knew the tongue
  From whence the mellow music came.

It rose, it fell, it died away
  Upon the rapture-feasted ear,
But still the breeze that murmured by,
  Came fraught with sounds I strained to hear.
It rose again, a gentle swell
  Of Nature's purest melody;
And every former sound was still,
  Save that alone so dear to me.

Robert's acquaintance with this accomplished musical family was not broken off by his removal to Edinburgh. It continued for some time, during which Lilias was the inspiring heroine of a poetical effusion more tender than the preceding, and a copy of which is procured from his correspondence with William Wilson, another early acquaintance. Wilson was a young man of about his own age, who had similar poetical and archæological tastes, and for a time edited a literary periodical in Dundee. Between the two there sprung up an extraordinary friendship, which was not weakened by Wilson some years later emigrating to America, and setting up as a bookseller at Poughkeepsie, a pretty town on the Hudson, in the state of New York. The letters which passed between them bring into view a number of particulars concerning my brother's literary aims and efforts. The poetical effusion just referred to was as follows. For the sake of euphony, Robert calls the heroine Leila:

FAIR LEILA'S EYES.

Fair Leila's eyes, fair Leila's eyes,
Oft fill my breast with glad surprise—
Surprise and love, and hope and pride,
With many a glowing thought beside.

The light that lies in Leila's eyes,
No trick of vain allurement tries,

But sheds a soft and constant beam,
Like moonlight on the tranquil stream ;
Yet as the seas from pole to pole
Move at yon gentle orb's control,
So tumults in my bosom rise
Beneath the charm of Leila's eyes.
Fair Leila's eyes, fair Leila's eyes, &c.

For Leila's eyes I 'd gladly shun
The flaunting glare of Fortune's sun,
And to the humble shade betake,
Which they a brighter heaven could make.
The wildfire lights I once pursued
Should ne'er again my steps delude :
I 'd fix my faith, and only prize
The steadfast light of Leila's eyes.
Fair Leila's eyes, fair Leila's eyes, &c.

Notwithstanding an ardent and mutual affection, Leila was not destined to be my brother's wife. Her mother, from extreme prudential considerations, abruptly terminated the intimacy. Robert was not supposed to be in the category of an eligible ; and it was rashly assumed that he might never possibly be so. It was a hapless decision, to which, considering his still comparatively humble circumstances, he refrained from offering any opposition ; nor did he by any indirect means try to influence the feelings of Leila. He would do nothing to bring her down from the sphere in which she moved under the parental administration. Acquiescing, perhaps with a sigh, in her mother's notions of what was right and commendable, Leila was in due time wedded to another. Her marriage, as will afterwards appear, proved particularly unfortunate, and became the source of acutely painful recollections. With a little patience and foresight, things would have

ended otherwise; for Robert's literary successes soon placed him in a position which had not been at all anticipated.

After being settled in India Place, he carried out the design of writing the *Traditions of Edinburgh*, a work for which he was in a degree prepared by those youthful explorations already adverted to, as well as by his having meditated over the subject. Professedly, the book was to consist of amusing particulars concerning old houses, distinguished characters, and curious incidents, such as could be picked up from individuals then still living, who had some remembrance of the Scottish capital in the early part of the reign of George III., when persons of rank were as yet dwellers in the tall tenements and dingy closes of the Old Town. One gentleman in the decline of life remembered as many as fifty titled personages, some of them of historical note, who dwelt in the Canongate (formerly the Court end of the town) as lately as 1769. There were others whose recollections did not extend so far back, but who in youth had been acquainted with interesting public characters who had disappeared. By procuring information from these various individuals regarding a past state of things, traditions were gathered together which in a few years later would have entirely vanished.

The *Traditions*, thus happily thought of while there were still living memories to draw upon, well suited the antiquarian and historical tastes of my brother, and he entered on the work with the keenest possible relish. Yet, in a business point of view, he and I were alike diffident as to the undertaking. Neither of us being able to risk the loss of even a few pounds, we announced that the work would be issued in

numbers as soon as a hundred subscribers were obtained. The requisite subscribers were in no long time procured; the work was put to press; and the first number published in March 1824. It met with such success, that it had to be reprinted, and the sale of the book increased until all the numbers were issued, forming when complete two volumes post octavo. I was, of course, the printer and publisher, the whole case and press work being, as hitherto, executed with my own hands—a piece of duty of which I entertain a pleasant remembrance.

There was much family exultation over Robert's successful achievement, regarding which there were sundry congratulations from persons whose good opinion it was important to obtain. Writing to his friend Wilson, whom he always addressed as his 'dear Willie,' he refers gratifyingly to the *Traditions*, and the manner in which the book had brought him into notice: 'This little work is taking astonishingly, and I am getting a great deal of credit by it. It has also been the means of introducing me to many of the most respectable leading men of the town, and has attracted to me the attention of not a few of the most eminent literary characters. What would you think, for instance, of the venerable author of the *Man of Feeling* calling on me in his carriage to contribute his remarks in manuscript on my work! The value of the above two great advantages is incalculable to a young tradesman and author like me. It saves me twenty years of mere laborious plodding by the common walk, and gives me at twenty-two all the respectability which I could have expected at forty.'

To Mr Constable, to whom the project of the *Traditions* had been confided, he writes, July 15, 1824:

'In fulfilment of your sanguine predictions, the work has *taken* in a most astonishing manner.' Elated by this remarkable success, and with overwrought expectations as to further sales, a new and inconsiderately large edition was executed, which led to some inconvenience. Perceiving when it was too late that the thing was overdone, my brother in a dejected mood wrote to Mr Constable, who had been most friendly throughout, asking for his counsel on the subject. His letter is dated April 6, 1825. 'I want,' says he, 'your advice: the vastness of the edition is too much for my slender and ill-formed capital, and I begin to feel the distresses of premature and ill-judged speculation. No doubt, the thing will ultimately pay, and *well*, but then, how am I to keep afloat till I reach the shore? Come weal, come woe, I have therefore made up my mind to extricate myself from the miseries of publication, so that I can only get anything like a fair remuneration for the literary part of the property. I shall try to see you to-morrow, and hope your goodness will unite with your sense and experience in pointing out the path I should choose.'

Arising out of these perplexities, and as wished by my brother, I waited on Mr Constable at his place of business in Princes Street. It was the only time I had the honour of conversing with this distinguished bookseller; the interview taking place at the period of an impending crisis in his affairs, of which, however, I was ignorant. I was received with the urbanity for which Mr Constable was noted. On my giving explanations regarding the work, he advised the transmission of a large portion of the superfluous edition to Messrs Hurst, Robinson, and Company, his correspondents in London, to whom he would write recommending the book to their

attention as publishers. Some large packages were accordingly sent. But after a little time, the adventure seemed so unsatisfactory, that I went to London to see after matters.

It was on a fine summer evening in 1825, that, arriving by a steamer in the Thames, I first visited the metropolis. The circumstance is to be specially remembered by me. It being too late to pursue my business mission, I bethought myself of calling on Mr John Clark, of Westminster, an artist whom I had accidentally met in Scotland the previous year, when taking views of the principal towns. A long walk brought me to Mr Clark's door. It was opened by a sprightly young lady, his daughter, whom I had never seen before. The interview with the family was agreeable. An intimacy ensued. And some years afterwards, when the fates were propitious, the sprightly young lady who had chanced to open the door became my wife.

Turning from this romantic episode. On the day after my arrival in London, I visited the publishing concern in Cheapside to which the *Traditions* had been consigned, and concluding that things looked ill, I ordered the whole stock to be returned. The decision was fortunate; for Hurst, Robinson, and Company shortly afterwards succumbed in the general storm of bankruptcy in which Sir Walter Scott, the Ballantynes, and Archibald Constable were lucklessly involved. We lost nothing. To wind up the affair, the stock and copyright of the *Traditions* were disposed of to William Tait, for a sum of between three and four hundred pounds. In this way, everything terminated happily. What became of the money, will afterwards appear. In better days, when circumstances permitted, we were able to purchase

back the copyright, and execute fresh and improved editions of the work. In an introductory notice to a new edition in 1868, Robert, at my request, gave the following account of the manner in which the book was produced and received:

'I am about to do what very few could do without emotion—revise a book which I wrote forty-five years ago. This little work came out in the Augustan days of Edinburgh, when Jeffrey and Scott, Wilson and the Ettrick Shepherd, Dugald Stewart and Alison, were daily giving the productions of their minds to the public, and while yet Archibald Constable acted as the unquestioned emperor of the publishing world. I was then an insignificant person of the age of twenty; yet, destitute as I was both of means and friends, I formed the hope of writing something which would attract attention. The subject I proposed was one lying readily at hand, the romantic things connected with Old Edinburgh. If, I calculated, a first *part* or *number* could be issued, materials for others might be expected to come in, for scores of old inhabitants, even up perhaps to the very "oldest," would then contribute their reminiscences.

'The plan met with success. Materials almost unbounded came to me, chiefly from aged professional and mercantile gentlemen, who usually, at my first introduction to them, started at my youthful appearance, having formed the notion that none but an old person would have thought of writing such a book. A friend gave me a letter to Mr Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, who, I was told, knew the scandal of the time of Charles II. as well as he did the merest gossip of the day, and had much to say regarding the good society of a hundred years ago.

'Looking back from the year 1868, I feel that C. K. S. has himself become, as it were, a tradition of Edinburgh. His thin effeminate figure, his voice pitched *in alt.*—his attire, as he took his daily walks on Princes Street, a long blue frock-coat, black trousers, rather wide below, and sweeping over white stockings and neat shoes—something like a web of white cambric round his neck, and a brown wig coming down to his eyebrows—had long established him as what is called a character. He had recently edited a book containing many stories of diablerie, and another in which the original narrative of ultra-presbyterian church history had to bear a series of cavalier notes of the most mocking character. He had a quaint biting wit, which people bore as they would a scratch from a provoked cat. Essentially, he was good-natured, and fond of merriment. He had considerable gifts of drawing, and one caricature portrait by him of Queen Elizabeth dancing, "high and disposedly," before the Scotch ambassadors, is the delight of everybody who has seen it. He was intensely aristocratic, and cared nothing for the interests of the great multitude. He complained that one never heard of any gentlefolks committing crimes now-a-days, as if that were a disadvantage to them or the public. Any case of a Lady Jane stabbing a perjured lover would have delighted him. While the child of whim, Mr Sharpe was generally believed to possess respectable talents, by which, with a need for exerting them, he might have achieved distinction. His ballad of the "Murder of Caerlaverock," in the *Minstrelsy*, is a masterly production; and the concluding verses haunt one like a beautiful strain of music:

"To sweet Lincluden's haly cells
Fu' dowie I 'll repair;
There Peace wi' gentle Patience dwells,
Nae deadly feuds are there.

In tears I 'll wither ilka charm,
Like draps o' balefu' yew;
And wail the beauty that could harm
A knight sae brave and true."

'After what I had heard and read of Charles Sharpe, I called upon him at his mother's house, No. 93 Princes Street, in a somewhat excited frame of mind. His servant conducted me to the first floor, and shewed me into what is generally called amongst us the back drawing-room, which I found carpeted with green cloth, and full of old family portraits, some on the walls, but many more on the floor. A small room leading off this one behind, was the place where Mr Sharpe gave audience. Its diminutive space was stuffed full of old curiosities, cases with family bijouterie, &c. One petty object was strongly indicative of the man—a calling-card of Lady Charlotte Campbell, the once adored beauty, stuck into the frame of a picture. He must have kept it at that time about thirty years. On appearing, Mr Sharpe received me very cordially, telling me he had seen and been pleased with my first two numbers. Indeed, he and Sir Walter Scott had talked together of writing a book of the same kind in company, and calling it *Reekiana*, which plan, however, being anticipated by me, the only thing that remained for him was to cast any little matters of the kind he possessed into my care. I expressed myself duly grateful, and took my leave. The consequence was, the appearance of notices regarding the eccentric Lady Anne Dick, the

beautiful Susanna, Countess of Eglintoune, the Lord Justice-clerk Alva, and the Duchess of Queensberry (the "Kitty" of Prior), before the close of my first volume. Mr Sharpe's contributions were all of them given in brief notes, and had to be written out on an enlarged scale, with what I thought a regard to literary effect as far as the telling was concerned.

'By an introduction from Dr Chalmers, I visited a living lady who might be considered as belonging to the generation at the beginning of the reign of George III. Her husband, Alexander Murray, had, I believe, been Lord North's solicitor-general for Scotland. She herself, born before the Porteous Riot, and well remembering the Forty-five, was now within a very brief space of the age of a hundred. Although she had not married in her earlier years, her children, Mr Murray of Henderland and others, were all elderly people. I found the venerable lady seated at a window in her drawing-room in George Street, with her daughter, Miss Murray, taking the care of her which her extreme age required, and with some help from this lady, we had a conversation of about an hour. She spoke with due reverence of her mother's brother, the Lord Chief-justice Mansfield; and when I adverted to the long pamphlet against him written by Mr Andrew Stuart at the conclusion of the Douglas Cause, she said that, to her knowledge, he had never read it, such being his practice in respect of all attacks made upon him, lest they should disturb his equanimity in judgment. As the old lady was on intimate terms with Boswell, and had seen Johnson on his visit to Edinburgh—as she was the sister-in-law of Allan Ramsay the painter, and had lived in the most cultivated society of Scotland all

her long life—there were ample materials for conversation with her; but her small strength made this shorter and slower than I could have wished. When we came upon the *poet* Ramsay she seemed to have caught new vigour from the subject: she spoke with animation of the child-parties she had attended in his house on the Castlehill during a course of ten years before his death—an event which happened in 1757. He was "charming," she said; he entered so heartily into the plays of children. He, in particular, gained their hearts by making houses for their dolls. How pleasant it was to learn that our great pastoral poet was a man who, in his private capacity, loved to sweeten the daily life of his fellow-creatures, and particularly of the young! At a warning from Miss Murray, I had to tear myself away from this delightful and never-to-be-forgotten interview.

'I had, one or two years before, when not out of my teens, attracted some attention from Sir Walter Scott, by writing for him and presenting (through Mr Constable) a transcript of the songs of the *Lady of the Lake*, in a style of peculiar caligraphy, which I practised for want of any better way of attracting the notice of people superior to myself. When George IV. some months afterwards came to Edinburgh, good Sir Walter remembered me, and procured for me the business of writing the address of the Royal Society of Edinburgh to his Majesty, for which I was handsomely paid. Several other learned bodies followed the example, for Sir Walter Scott was the arbiter of everything during that frantic time, and thus I was substantially benefited by his means.

'According to what Mr Constable told me, the great

man liked me, in part because he understood I was from Tweedside. On seeing the earlier numbers of the *Traditions*, he expressed astonishment as to "where the boy got all the information." But I did not see or hear from him till the first volume had been completed. He then called upon me one day, along with Mr Lockhart. I was overwhelmed with the honour, for Sir Walter Scott was almost an object of worship to me. I literally could not utter a word. While I stood silent, I heard him tell his companion that Charles Sharpe was a writer in the *Traditions*, and taking up the volume, he read aloud what he called one of his *quaint bits*. "The ninth Earl of Eglintoune was one of those patriarchal peers who live to an advanced age—indefatigable in the frequency of their marriages and the number of their children—who linger on and on, with an unfailing succession of young countesses, and die at last leaving a progeny interspersed throughout the whole of Douglas's *Peerage*, two volumes, folio, re-edited by Wood." And then both gentlemen went on laughing for perhaps two minutes with interjections: "How like Charlie!"—"What a strange being he is!"—"*Two volumes, folio, re-edited by Wood*—ha, ha, ha! There you have him past all doubt;" and so on. I was too much abashed to tell Sir Walter that it was only an impudent little bit of writing of my own, part of the solution into which I had diffused the actual notes of Sharpe. But, having occasion to write next day to Mr Lockhart, I mentioned Sir Walter's mistake; and he was soon after good enough to inform me that he had set his friend right as to the authorship, and they had had a *second* hearty laugh on the subject.

'A very few days after this visit, Sir Walter sent me,

along with a kind letter, a packet of manuscript, consisting of sixteen folio pages, in his usual close handwriting, and containing all the reminiscences he could at the time summon up of old persons and things in Edinburgh. Such a treasure to me! And such a gift from the greatest literary man of the age to the humblest! Is there a literary man of the present age who would scribble as much for any humble aspirant? Nor was this the only act of liberality of Scott to me. When I was preparing a subsequent work, *The Popular Rhymes of Scotland*, he sent me whole sheets of his recollections, with appropriate explanations. For years thereafter, he allowed me to join him in his walks home from the Parliament House, in the course of which he freely poured into my greedy ears anything he knew regarding the subjects of my studies. His kindness and good-humour on these occasions were untiring. I have since found, from his journal, that I had met him on certain days when his heart was overladen with woe. Yet his welcome to me was the same. After 1826, however, I saw him much less frequently than before, for I knew he grudged every moment not spent in thinking and working on the fatal tasks he had assigned to himself for the redemption of his debts.

'All through the preparation of this book, I was indebted a good deal to a gentleman who was neither a literary man nor an artist himself, but hovered round the outskirts of both professions, and might be considered as a useful adjunct to both. Every votary of pen or pencil amongst us knew David Bridges at his drapery establishment in the Lawnmarket, and many had been indebted to his obliging disposition. A quick, dark-eyed little man, with lips full of sensibility and a

tongue unloving of rest, such a man in a degree as one can suppose Garrick to have been, he held a sort of court every day, where wits and painters jostled with people wanting coats, jerkins, and spotted handkerchiefs. The place was small, and had no saloon behind; so, whenever David had got some "bit" to shew you, he dragged you down a dark stair to a packing-place, lighted only by a grate from the street, and there, amidst plaster-casts numberless, would fix you with his glittering eye, till he had convinced you of the fine handling, the "buttery touches" (a great phrase with him), the admirable "scummling" (another), and so forth. It was in the days prior to the Royal Scottish Academy and its exhibitions; and it was left in a great measure to David Bridges to bring forward aspirants in art. Did such a person long for notice, he had only to give David one of his best "bits," and in a short time he would find himself chattered into fame in that profound, the grate of which I never can pass without recalling something of the buttery touches of those old days. The Blackwood wits, who laughed at everything, fixed upon our friend the title of "Director-general of the Fine Arts," which was, however, too much of a truth to be a jest. To this extraordinary being I had been introduced somehow, and, entering heartily into my views, he brought me information, brought me friends, read and criticised my proofs, and would, I daresay, have written the book itself if I had so desired. It is impossible to think of him without a smile, but at the same time a certain melancholy, for his life was one which, I fear, proved a poor one for himself.

'Before the *Traditions* were finished, I had become favourably acquainted with many gentlemen of letters

and others, who were pleased to think that Old Edinburgh had been chronicled. Wilson gave me a laudatory sentence in the *Noctes Ambrosianæ*. The Bard of Ettrick, viewing my boyish years, always spoke of and to me as an unaccountable sort of person, but never could be induced to believe otherwise than that I had written all my traditions from my own head. I had also the pleasure of enjoying some intercourse with the venerable Henry Mackenzie, who had been born in 1745, but always seemed to feel as if the *Man of Feeling* had been written only one instead of sixty years ago, and as if there was nothing particular in antique occurrences. The whole affair was pretty much of a triumph at the time. Now, when I am giving it a final revision, I reflect with touched feelings, that all the brilliant men of the time when it was written are, without an exception, passed away, while, for myself, I am forced to claim the benefit of Horace's humanity :

> "Solve senescentem mature sanus equum, ne
> Peccet ad extremum ridendus, et ilia ducat."' *

In this recent edition of the *Traditions* are comprehended a variety of particulars gathered since the first appearance of the work, and calculated to heighten the legendary picture of Old Edinburgh. A great proportion of this new matter was drawn from a small work which my brother wrote under the title of *Reekiana*, which appeared some years later. The new edition of the *Traditions* is therefore a considerable improvement on the old.

Contemporaneously with the issue of the *Traditions*,

* Discreetly unharness in good time a horse growing old, lest in the end he make a miserable break-down.

my brother produced a small work to help the fund raised on behalf of the sufferers by a series of calamitous fires in Edinburgh, in November 1824. It consisted of a popular account of the chief *Fires which have occurred in Edinburgh since the beginning of the eighteenth century.* In the excitement of the moment, it had a considerable sale, and was so far useful.

The success of the *Traditions* encouraged the preparation of a companion to that work, applying to the general features of the city, and partly devoted to the service of strangers. It was styled *Walks in Edinburgh*, and was issued in 1825. From the pleasing anecdotic style in which the book was written, it was well received, and added to the literary repute of the writer.

Diligent, painstaking, and with a love of what was old and characteristic, Robert had for some time been collecting a variety of familiar sayings in rhyme, and these appeared early in 1826, under the title of *Popular Rhymes of Scotland.* As has been already mentioned, Sir Walter Scott, with his accustomed kindness, forwarded some contributions to the work, which has passed through three editions. As regards the purport of this collection of national rhymes, the following explanation is given in the preface to the third and considerably extended edition :

'Reared amidst friends to whom popular poetry furnished a daily enjoyment, and led by a tendency of my own mind to delight in whatever is quaint, whimsical, and old, I formed the wish, at an early period of life, to complete, as I considered it, the collection of the traditionary verse of Scotland, by gathering together and publishing all that remained of a multitude of rhymes and short snatches of verse applicable to places,

families, natural objects, amusements, &c., wherewith, not less than by song and ballad, the cottage fireside was amused in days gone past, while yet printed books were only familiar to comparatively few. This task was executed as well as circumstances would permit, and a portion of the *Popular Rhymes of Scotland* was published in 1826. Other objects have since occupied me, generally of a graver kind; yet amidst them all, I have never lost my wish to complete the publication of these relics of the old *natural literature* of my native country.'

Next in succession after the *Popular Rhymes*, he, in 1826, produced the *Picture of Scotland*, a work in two volumes, the materials for which had been gathered together by a succession of toilsome peregrinations over a large part of the country, exclusively of previous historical studies. An ardent attachment to Scotland had led him to undertake the work; for, as he said: 'Instead of the pilgrim's scallop in my hat, I took for motto the glowing expression of Burns—"I have no dearer aim than to make leisurely journeys through Caledonia; to sit on the fields of her battles; to wander on the romantic banks of her streams; and to muse by the stately towers of venerable ruins, once the homesteads of her heroes."' In the main topographical, the book comprehended an interlarding of native anecdote and humour, along with illustrations of the manners of a past age. 'The reclamation of that which is altogether poetry—the wonderful, beautiful past,' he adds, was a primary object of the book, being 'conscious and certain that, though many of his own generation may not give him credit for so exalted a purpose, the people who shall afterwards inherit this romantic land will appreciate

what could not have been preserved but with a view to their gratification.'

The *Picture of Scotland* was followed in rapid succession by several works which still further extended Robert's popularity as a writer. The quantity of literary work of one kind or other which he went through during some years at this period was astonishing, more particularly when we know that he continued to give a certain degree of attention daily to business. Indeed, with all his love of letters, he by no means relied on his efforts with the pen. He used to repeat a sage remark of Scott, that literature is a good cane to walk with, but not a staff to lean upon—an observation too apt to be neglected by young and inexperienced writers.

Archibald Constable, in his attempts to revive a publishing business after the catastrophe of 1825, happily carried out a project which he had already conceived and initiated. This was the publication of a series of cheap and handy volumes in popular literature, specially written by persons of tried ability for the undertaking, and designated *Constable's Miscellany.* In a letter to Mr Constable dated April 19, 1827, Robert offered to become a contributor. He says—'Observing in your Prospectus that you intend to publish an account of the Rebellion of 1745, I beg to state that I have made considerable collections for such a work, and would be glad to get it a place among the "troops of the Miscellany." My design is simply to give a popular narrative, with all the characteristic anecdotes, and I think the whole might go into one of your volumes. An Edinburgh bookseller, with whom I have already had some literary transactions, is inclined to think that my work might succeed in the

extended and independent form of two volumes octavo; but with deference to his opinion, which I feel to be highly flattering, I think the subject, interesting as it is, would scarcely warrant so massive a publication, nor could I give it a value sufficient to insure even the chance of success. . . . My work would be a good warrior, but one who could act to advantage only when forming an individual in a regular army, and under the command of an independent leader.'

The work so proposed was accepted, and appeared in *Constable's Miscellany* in 1828, as a *History of the Rebellion* of 1745, in two volumes. It was followed in the Miscellany at the close of the same year by a *History of the Rebellions in Scotland under the Marquis of Montrose and others from* 1638 *to* 1660, in two volumes; this was followed, in 1829, by a *History of the Rebellions in Scotland under Viscount Dundee and the Earl of Mar in* 1689 *and* 1715, in one volume; and finally, in 1830, Robert contributed the *Life of James I.*, in two volumes. Such, however, was not the entire amount of his literary labour. He edited *Scottish Ballads and Songs*, three volumes (1829), and the *Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Scotsmen*, four volumes (1832–1834); besides which, he furnished Mr Lockhart with a variety of valuable notes for his *Life of Robert Burns*. With improved prospects by these and other means, my brother removed his bookselling business to Hanover Street, where the conducting of his establishment fell partly on James, who had been reared as a coadjutor.

Of all the works which he so produced immediately after the *Traditions*, that which attained the greatest and most enduring popularity was the *History of the Rebellion of* 1745, the materials for which were gathered

from the principal sources of information available in 1827. Several families, whose ancestors had been compromised in the insurrection, obligingly furnished traditional anecdotes for the work, which thereby assumed a character considerably different from one consisting of dry historical annals. While received with general approbation, the *History of the Rebellion*, from the *feeling* with which it was written, led to a notion that it was the work of a Jacobite. Such seems to have been the opinion of a writer in the *Quarterly Review*, who, in reviewing Lord Mahon's *History of England* (1839), refers to the 'many curious details, gleaned with exemplary diligence, and presented in a lively enough style,' in the histories of the rebellions of 1715 and 1745, by 'Mr Robert Chambers, a bookseller and antiquary of Edinburgh,' adding: 'His Jacobitism seems that of a rampant Highlander; and we doubt not, had he flourished at the proper time, he would have handled his claymore gallantly; nor are we at all surprised to hear that he enjoys considerable popularity among certain classes in Scotland; but we cannot anticipate that these historical performances will ever obtain a place in the English library.'

To conclusions as to his supposed Jacobitism, my brother made some demur. He declared that he 'disapproved of the insurrection of 1745, and held that it undoubtedly was a crime to disturb with war, and to some extent with rapine, a nation enjoying internal peace under a settled government. But, on the other hand, it was evident that those who followed Charles Edward acted according to their lights, with heroic self-devotion, and were not fairly liable to the vulgar ridicule and vituperations thrown upon them by those whose

duty it was to resist and punish them. Accordingly, it was just that the adventures of the persons concerned should be detailed with impartiality, and their unavoidable misfortunes be spoken of with humane feeling.' Such is the vindicatory remark he makes in a prefatory note to the seventh edition of the work, issued as lately as 1869; and in the present day, few will be disposed to challenge the accuracy of this view of the matter. Whether this historical performance has obtained a place in what the reviewer is pleased to call 'the English library,' I am not prepared to say, further than that, without adventitious aid, it has been very extensively diffused in all parts of Great Britain, and remains, to appearance, a generally received work on the subject.

The new edition of the *History* just referred to has been so greatly extended as to be almost a new work. The prolific source of the fresh information that was obtained, was a collection of ten volumes in manuscript, styled on the title-pages the *Lyon in Mourning*, which had been prepared by the anxious care of the Right Rev. Bishop Forbes, of the Scottish Episcopal Church, and who was settled as a minister of that communion in Leith at the middle of the eighteenth century. Labouring under the suspicion that he was a Jacobite dangerous to the reigning dynasty, he was confined in Edinburgh Castle during the rebellion, and only liberated in 1746. By this means he was saved from the disasters of the falling cause, and brought into leisurely communication with a number of the insurgents, who were seized at various times and placed in confinement along with him. After regaining his liberty, Bishop Forbes prosecuted the design of collecting from the mouths and pens of the

survivors of the late enterprise such narratives, anecdotes, and memorabilia as they could give from their own knowledge, or as eye-witnesses, respecting this extraordinary historical episode. The whole of the trustworthy information so acquired was written on octavo sheets, which in the end formed volumes; and nothing can exceed the neatness, distinctness, and accuracy with which the whole task appears to have been performed. In allusion to the woe of Scotland for her exiled race of princes, the ten volumes composing the work were bound in black, and styled the *Lyon in Mourning*. The poor bishop died in 1776, leaving the collection to his widow, who, after many years, sold it to Sir Henry Steuart of Allanton, who had been induced to turn his attention to the subject; and he commenced a work designed to present a historical review of the different attempts made to restore the Stewart family to the throne. The work had been carried a certain length, when it was interrupted by ill-health, and permanently laid aside. On a visit to Allanton House in 1832, my brother first heard of the *Lyon*, and was so fortunate as to have it assigned to him for literary purposes. The result (1834) was the *Jacobite Memoirs of the Rebellion of 1745*. But from the widespread information contained in the collection, were drawn innumerable particulars of a deeply interesting kind for the revised edition of the *History*.

Between 1823 and 1835, Robert amused himself, and gave relief to his feelings, by occasionally writing poetical pieces, which he collected and printed in a volume for private circulation. His poetical powers did not aspire to be of a high or very original character, but there was a touching delicacy of sentiment and also much humour

in some of his performances that gained the approbation of his friends. One of his effusions purported to be written July 1829, in reference to the young lady, Miss Anne Kirkwood, to whom he was married in December of that year.

Towards the close of 1831, he made what many may think a bold attempt in literature. It was, by a collection of sayings and anecdotes, 'to vindicate, for the first time, the pretensions of the Scottish nation to the character of a witty and jocular, as they are already allowed to be a painstaking and enlightened, race.' The book, styled *Scottish Jests and Anecdotes*, certainly contained a prodigious array of good things, collected from all imaginable sources, including personal experience in general society. It being the first attempt of the kind, the editor says he felt as if 'entitled to some share of that praise which is so liberally bestowed upon discoverers like Cook and Parry, and might expect to be celebrated in after-ages as the first man who extended the geography of Fun beyond the Tweed.' That my brother had any merit in discovering that the Scotch are a 'witty' people, will be doubted by those who think them incapable of getting beyond a certain species of dry and caustic humour. One thing certainly remarkable in all works purporting to be collections of Scottish jests and anecdotes, is the abundance of droll sayings and doings of parish ministers, beadles, and old serving-men. With a number of amusing jocularities of this kind, the *Scottish Jests and Anecdotes* was pretty well received, and went through two editions; after which, dropping out of notice, it was left for the late Very Rev. Dean Ramsay to take up the subject in that more earnest spirit which has insured a great share of public approbation.

We have not yet completed the review of literary work in which Robert was engaged from about 1829 to 1832. Busied as he was, he undertook the editorship of the *Edinburgh Advertiser*, a newspaper of old standing, as well as an old style of politics, that has been latterly discontinued. In this line of duty, which was new to him, he gave much satisfaction by his assiduity and the tastefulness of his writing.

Between Sir Walter Scott and my brother personal intercourse had now ceased, for the great novelist was a confirmed invalid at Abbotsford. Letters, however, passed between them, as is observable from Robert's private papers, sometimes in reference to literary matters, and on other occasions concerning the introductions of strangers. A Miss MacLaughlin, with musical acquirements, having visited Edinburgh, besought for herself and her mother an introduction to Sir Walter, which being granted, the following letter was shortly afterwards received, dated from Abbotsford, March 7, 1831.

'My dear Mr Chambers—I was quite happy to see Miss MacLaughlin, who is a fine enthusiastic girl, and very, very pretty withal. They—that is, her mother and she—breakfasted with me, though I had what is unusual at Abbotsford, no female assistance. However, we got on very well; and I prepared the young lady a set of words to the air of *Crochallan*. But although Miss M. proposed to leave me a copy of the Celtic harmonies, I suppose the servant put it in her carriage. Purdie is the publisher. Will you get me a copy of the number containing *Crochallan*, with a prose translation by a competent person, and let me know the expense?

'I fear I cannot be of use to you in the way you propose, though I sincerely rejoice in your success, and would gladly promote it; but Dr Abercrombie threatens me with death

if I write so much. I must assist Lockhart a little, for you are aware of our connection, and he has always shewn me the duties of a son; but except that, and my own necessary work at the edition of the Waverley Novels, as they call them, I can hardly pretend to be a contributor, for, after all, that same dying is a ceremony one would put off as long as he could. . . . I am, dear Mr Chambers, very faithfully yours, WALTER SCOTT.'

The next letter received, which has the date Abbotsford, August 2, 1831, bears a melancholy record of Sir Walter's growing bodily weakness.

'DEAR MR CHAMBERS—I received your letter through Mr Cadell. It is impossible for a gentleman to say no to a request which flatters him more than he deserves. But even although it is said in the newspapers, I actually am far from well. I am keeping my head as cool as I can, and speak with some difficulty; but I am unwilling to make a piece of work about nothing, and instead of doing so, I ought rather to receive the lady as civilly as I can. I am much out, riding, or rather crawling about my plantations in the morning, when the weather will permit; but a card from Miss Eccles will find me at home, and happy to see her, although the effect is like to be disappointment to the lady. I am your faithful, humble servant.

'I have owed you a letter longer than I intended; but I write with pain, and generally use the hand of a friend. I sign with my initials, as enough to represent the poor half of me that is left, but am still much yours, W. S.'

This appears to have been the last letter received by my brother from Sir Walter Scott.

CHAPTER VIII.

SOME REMINISCENCES—1822 TO 1832.

ROBERT'S success with the *Traditions*, and my own progress in the new field I had selected, left nothing to regret. The 'Dark Ages' had vanished into the dim past. The medieval period had dawned. There was no longer a fierce skirmishing with difficulties, but there was much less drollery. As men get up in the world they, as a rule, take on the gravity which by immemorial usage pertains to what are called the respectable classes. They are likewise apt to part convoy with a number of individuals who have hitherto kept within hail. The reason is plain. Each, from choice, pursues his own peculiar course. Mankind are roughly divided, in unequal proportions, into two sets—those who consume day by day all they can lay their hands on, thinking no more of what is to be their fate in a year or ten years hence than the lower animals; others—a much less numerous body—who are always looking ahead and acting with less or more regard to the future. What impressive examples one could produce of these differences of taste! Two young men, of good education, start in life with pretty equal chances of success. One of them rises by gradations to be

Lord Chancellor: where do we find the other? Seated with his back to the wall, drawing figures in red and white chalk on a smooth piece of pavement, in the hope of retiring to his evening haunt with the sum of half-a-crown in sixpences and halfpence, to be spent probably in the felicity of a carouse. That, we may presume, is the line of life he has deliberately preferred. He had worked for beggary, and he has got it. When a man will make no sacrifice of his pleasures, but sets his heart on freshly beginning the world every day, or every week, it is not difficult to do so. The facility with which the thing can be done explains much of what seems to perplex society and drive it almost to its wits' end.

In the strange complication of human affairs, luck, no doubt, counts for something; but have we properly considered what is luck? Surely, the business of life cannot be said to be conducted on the hap-hazard principles of a game of roulette! Is there no pre-arrangement—no Providential design—leading by a series of circumstances to results which have been hitherto shrouded from our finite intelligence? To be lucky, as it is called, one requires to make some reasonably strenuous exertion—probably to make some unpleasant sacrifices. Erskine might not, perhaps, have risen to be Lord Chancellor but for the fortunate sprain which caused him to relinquish an intended visit, and return home; a circumstance which brought him under the notice of a maritime gentleman, whose case he took up, mastered, and carried through triumphantly. But we must bear in mind that he had, by previous and toilsome exertion, and no little self-sacrifice, prepared himself to benefit by the fortunate accident which brought

him into notice. It is a pity that one has to make so many sacrifices of inclinations—to *thole* a good deal—possibly to relinquish some amusements—in order to attain anything like permanent comfort; but so it is, and ever will be. When my brother and I got emancipated from the Dark Ages, it was our fate to proceed on a course wholly different from that which several persons we had known were pleased to pursue. Their policy being to live all for the present, and not for the future, we went naturally in opposite directions. Apparently wishing to end as they began, they spent daily or weekly all they earned, and were ever at the same point of progress. They doubtless, however, enjoyed themselves to their own satisfaction, and there we must leave them.

Relaxing no effort, five to six years had effected a beneficial change of circumstances. We were both, in a sense, raised to a higher platform, and had, indeed, reached that social status, if not something above it, which had been lost by the family calamity of 1812. It seemed as if the gales of fortune were at length about to blow steadily in our favour, without disturbance from any cross-current. We were not, however, to be let off so easily. Fate had one more trial in reserve.

My father, who had come to live in Edinburgh, began to take a lively interest in his sons, whose success was so clearly imputable to the adroit way in which he had thrown them on their own resources, and obliged them to think and act for themselves, that he had, as he thought, established a fair claim on their good offices. With this agreeable notion, and wholly reckless of consequences, he plunged into a litigation, which I can refer to with any degree of patience, only from the insight that was afforded of new and diverting phases of character.

Among his dreams of the past, he raked up the fancy of trying to recover a piece of property, which had long ago belonged to the family, but had somehow been suffered to drift, improperly, as was alleged, into other hands. The property in question was a wretched old house, perhaps not worth £200, and the proposal of fighting for it in the Court of Session was repugnant alike to my brother's feelings and my own. Unfortunately, any remonstrances on our part, and also strong objections urged by my mother, were unavailing. The suit was commenced, and its history might almost furnish materials for a tragi-comic drama.

The prime adviser in the case was a person who, from his reputed knowledge of law, was held in high esteem by certain classes of people. He was a neat little man, in drab breeches and white woollen stockings, who laboured under the infirmity of a stiff crooked knee, on which account he walked very oddly, by successive jerks, with the help of a stick. Having been bred in the office of a country solicitor, this erudite person had formed an acquaintance with legal forms and technicalities, and adding to this a theoretic knowledge of Scotch law from Erskine's *Institutes*, he was qualified, as many thought, for acting as counsel to those who stood in need of legal advice. With his acquirements, it was perhaps only as an act of considerable condescension that he made his living as a dealer in certain liquid exhilarants, in an inferior part of the city. Under the inspiring counsels of this genius, the case ran its course through the court, producing the most agonising anticipations of what was to be the result. As we had all foreseen, my father lost his suit. Then came the matter of costs,

and my brother and I were (as was thought reasonable) looked to for payment. It was a thing we had nothing to do with, but that made no difference. As many too well know, there is in family relationship a power of moral torture which reaches far beyond the bounds of legal, or any other, obligation. Money that I could ill spare was swept away, and Robert lost a large part of what he had realised by selling the copyright and stock of the *Traditions* to Mr Tait—a dismal outcome of hopes, anxieties, and exertions, but not beyond what has often to be endured. These losses kept us back one or two years.

Now came a domestic tragedy, on which it would be painful to linger. My unfortunate father went from bad to worse after the loss of his lawsuit. The flute which cheered him in the spring-tide of life was laid aside, as too simple a means of exhilaration. Under his accumulation of disasters and cankering reminiscences, ascribable in a great degree to his inconsiderateness and want of moral courage, he died in November 1824, in the week of those conflagrations of which Robert has given some account.

Shortly after the issue of the *Traditions*, it became expedient for me to relinquish printing, and to adhere more exclusively to other branches of business, including some undertakings of a literary nature. The parting with my poor little press, which had latterly been superseded by newer mechanism, was not unaccompanied with that kind of regret with which one bids farewell to an old and cherished companion. It is pleasing, however, to know that it did not suffer destruction, but was purchased by a person in Glasgow, who aspired to begin as a printer in a way similar to myself; and for any-

thing I know to the contrary, this little machine may still be creaking and wheezing on the banks of the Clyde, for, like many who are afflicted with asthma, it possessed a wonderful degree of vitality.

Partly with the design of furnishing a companion to the *Picture of Scotland*, I commenced a work, purporting to describe the institutions, secular and religious, peculiar to our northern kingdom, and which I styled the *Book of Scotland*. The work required considerable research as well as personal knowledge, and the task was one for which I avow myself to have been ill qualified. I sold it to a publisher for thirty pounds. It is now very properly forgotten. Independently of its imperfections, the subjects treated of would now stand in need of a new elucidation, in consequence of innumerable recent legislative alterations. Poor as was this production, it procured me the honour of being employed along with Robert to prepare the *Gazetteer of Scotland* for a publisher; the price to be paid for it being a hundred pounds. It was to be a compilation from all available and trustworthy sources, along with such original matter as could reasonably be infused into it. To impart a sufficient degree of freshness, I made several pedestrian journeys to different parts of the country, gathering here and there particulars which I thought would be of value.

In these excursions I had necessarily to husband time and exercise a pretty rigorous economy. Lodging at the humbler class of inns, my expenses did not exceed a few shillings a day. My object was to see as many places as possible, and fix their situation and appearance in my mind. I took notes only of dates, inscriptions, and other matters demanding great precision. I now

found the value of cultivating the memory, and of having learned to rely on recollections of places which I had seen. From practice, I acquired the art of summoning up the remembrance of scenes and places which I had visited, and persons I had seen, even to very minute particulars. Gathering and storing up observations in this way, I traversed Fife and the lower parts of Perth and Forfar shires. My longest stretch in one day was from the neighbourhood of Cupar to Edinburgh, by Lochleven, Kinross, Dunfermline, Inverkeithing, and Queensferry, a stretch of forty miles, varied by the passage of the ferry. It was a delightful ramble in a long day in June, which left the most pleasing recollections, notwithstanding that I was a little foot-sore on reaching home. By such means as this I was able to impart some originality to the ordinary descriptions in the *Gazetteer*.

Although my brother was ostensibly associated with me in this production, his duties were chiefly those of final supervisor of the press. As the work was a thick octavo volume, double columns, in small type, the mere penmanship of it extended to ten thousand pages, many of which I wrote twice or thrice over, to insure accuracy. My share of the price of copyright was seventy pounds. This book was a great literary exercise, and as such, remuneration was of inferior consequence. I wrote the whole of it, as I had previous productions, behind the counter, amidst the involvements and interruptions of ordinary business; by which means I acquired a kind of facility of dropping and resuming a subject at a moment's notice, which proved of considerable value. To finish the work at the appointed time, I was frequently compelled to remain

at the desk for two to three hours after closing up for the night. The labour incurred by so much thinking and writing, together with close application otherwise, unameliorated with any sort of recreation, brought on an illness which for some time assumed a threatening appearance. But this was happily got over without any permanently bad effects.

The publication of the *Gazetteer* helped perhaps to bring me a little more into notice; but if local notoriety was desirable, that was incidentally effected by writing a series of letters in an Edinburgh newspaper, concerning that species of civic administration which terminated shortly afterwards in a financial collapse. These letters bore my name, for it has been with me a rule in life never to write an anonymous letter. If ever there was an instance of the value of this species of candour, it was on the present occasion. The letters engaged public attention, and when issued in a collected form in a small pamphlet, the sale was immense. On looking back to this exploit, I feel that the strictures were much too severe, and visited on individuals that which properly belonged to a system.

Though these and some other literary exercises were of no pecuniary advantage adequate to the time and trouble spent upon them, they were immensely serviceable as a training, preparatory to the part which it was my destiny to take in the cheap literature movement of modern times. It is regarding that movement, and the change which it wrought in my brother's as well as in my own course of life, that something is now to be said.

CHAPTER IX.

CHEAP LITERATURE MOVEMENT OF 1832.

ALTHOUGH, towards the close of the eighteenth and in the early part of the present century, books, chiefly reprints, were in time cheapened, and greatly popularised by a series of enterprising publishers, and although books of all kinds were rendered generally accessible by circulating libraries, the more aspiring of the humbler orders, particularly those at a distance from towns, still experienced great difficulty in procuring works to improve their knowledge or entertain their leisure hours. Perusing the memoirs of Robert Burns, James Ferguson, Thomas Telford, George Stephenson, and others who, by dint of genius and painstaking study, raised themselves from obscurity to distinction, we perceive what were their difficulties in getting hold of books; such as they did procure being mostly borrowed from kindly disposed neighbours.

Usually, in these untoward circumstances, the mind of the rustic youth of Scotland took the direction of rhyming in the style of Ramsay and Robert Fergusson. This was specially observable in the case of Telford, who, while still a journeyman mason in his native Eskdale, contributed verses to Ruddiman's *Weekly Magazine*, under the signature of 'Eskdale Tam.' In one of these compositions, which was addressed to Burns,

he sketched his own character, and the efforts he made to improve his stock of knowledge by poring over a borrowed volume, with no better light than what was afforded by the cottage fire:

> 'Nor pass the tentie curious lad,
> Who o'er the ingle hangs his head,
> And begs of neighbours books to read;
> For hence arise
> Thy country's sons, who far are spread,
> Baith bold and wise.'

So matters remained; the protracted French war and its immediate consequences postponing any substantial improvement, at least as regarded the less affluent classes. From 1815 till 1820, while the marvellous fictions of Scott and the poems of Byron were issuing with rapidity from the press, low-priced and scurrilous prints, ministering to the fancies of the seditious and depraved, were also produced in vast numbers. The whole were suppressed by a statute, imposing a stamp, in 1820.

No cheap unstamped paper could be safely attempted immediately after this, unless it were purely literary, and abstained from any comment on public affairs. Of this class was the obscure periodical attempted by my brother and myself in 1821. In 1822, a cheap weekly sheet, styled the *Mirror*, was begun in London by John Limbird, but with little pretension to original writing. It was illustrated with wood-engravings, was generally amusing, and so far might be defined as a step in the right direction.

From about this time, benevolently disposed and thoughtful men set about devising methods for improving the intelligence and professional skill of artisans. The School of Arts, the earliest of its class, was founded

in Edinburgh in 1821. Two years later, Dr Birkbeck founded a Mechanics' Institution in London, and another in Glasgow. Coeval with this movement, the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge was founded in 1825. Viewed as a distinct and imposing effort to stimulate the popular understanding, this association, with all the mistakes which marked its short career, is never to be spoken of without respect. The object of the Society was to issue a series of cheap treatises on the exact sciences, and on various branches of knowledge. In 1827, Archibald Constable, a man of bold conceptions, commenced the issue of his *Miscellany* of volumes of a popular kind; and others catching the contagion, for a time there was a perfect deluge of works, at a moderate price, designed for the instruction and amusement of the multitude.

It is interesting to look back on those times, and note the progressive steps towards a thoroughly cheap yet original and wholesome literature. There was merit in the very shortcomings and failures, for, with their temporary or partial success, they shewed that the public were not indisposed to support that in which they could have reason to place confidence. Some mistakes had been committed. The prints suppressed in 1820 had dealt principally in invective, of which no good can come.

The reign of William IV. was the true era of the revival of cheap periodical literature. So far as the humbler orders were concerned, it almost appeared as if the art of printing, through certain mechanical appliances—particularly the paper-making machine and the printing-machine—was only now effectually discovered.

To meet the popular demand, a number of low-priced serials, of a worthless, or at least ephemeral kind, were

issued in London in 1831. At the same time, there were several set on foot in Edinburgh. The forerunner and best of these was styled the *Cornucopia*, which consisted of four pages, folio, and was sold for three-halfpence. The editor and proprietor of this popular sheet was George Mudie, a clever but erratic being, who, I believe, had been a compositor. As the *Cornucopia* contained a quantity of amusing matter, and in point of size resembled a newspaper, it was deemed a marvel of cheapness; for at this time the ordinary price of a newspaper was sevenpence. Eminently successful as a commercial undertaking, Mr Mudie's sheet, if properly conducted, could not have failed to be permanently successful.

As a bookseller, I had occasion to deal in these cheap papers. One thing was greatly against them. They were frequently behind time on the day of publication; and any irregularity in the appearance of periodicals is generally fatal. It was also obvious that they were conducted on no definite plan. They consisted for the most part of disjointed and unauthorised extracts from books, clippings from floating literature, old stories, and stale jocularities. With no purpose but to furnish temporary amusement, they were, as it appeared to me, the perversion of what, if rightly conducted, might become a powerful engine of social improvement. Pondering on this idea, I resolved to take advantage of the evidently growing taste for cheap literature, and lead it, as far as was in my power, in a proper direction.

It is, I think, due to myself and others to offer this explanation. I have never aspired to the reputation of being the originator of low-priced serials; but only, as far as I can judge, the first to make a determined attempt

to impart such a character to these productions in our own day, as might tend to instruct and elevate independently of mere passing amusement. Professionally, I considered that the attempt was a noble and fair venture—one for which I might not be disqualified by previous literary experiences, humble as these had been. The enterprise promised to be at least in concord with my feelings.

Before taking any active step, I mentioned the matter to Robert. Let us, I said, endeavour to give a reputable literary character to what is at present mostly mean or trivial, and of no permanent value; but he, thinking only of the not very creditable low-priced papers then current, did not entertain a favourable opinion of my projected undertaking, was shocked even at the very proposal. With all affection, however, he promised to give me what literary assistance was in his power, and in this I was not disappointed. Consulting no one else, and in that highly wrought state of mind which overlooks all but the probability of success, I at length, in January 1832, issued the prospectus of *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, a weekly sheet at three-halfpence. Announcing myself as editor, I stated that 'no communications in verse or prose were wanted.' In this, there was an air of self-confidence, not perhaps to be justified, but, as shewing that my periodical was not to be composed of the contributions of anonymous and irresponsible correspondents, the effect was on the whole beneficial.

The first number appeared on Saturday, the 4th of February 1832. It contained an opening address written in a fervid state of feeling, as may be judged by the following passages.

'The principle by which I have been actuated, is to

take advantage of the universal appetite for instruction which at present exists; to supply to that appetite food of the best kind, in such form and at such price as must suit the convenience of every man in the British dominions. Every Saturday, when the poorest labourer in the country draws his humble earnings, he shall have it in his power to purchase with an insignificant portion of even that humble sum, a meal of healthful, useful, and agreeable mental instruction. Whether I succeed in my wishes, a brief space of time will determine. I throw myself on the good sense of my countrymen for support; all I seek is a fair field wherein to exercise my industry in their service. It may perhaps be considered an invidious remark, when I state as my humble conviction, that the people of Great Britain and Ireland have never yet been properly cared for, in the way of presenting knowledge under its most cheering and captivating aspect, to their immediate observation. The scheme of diffusing knowledge has certainly been more than once attempted by associations established under peculiar advantages. Yet, the great end has not been gained. The dearth of the publications, official inflexibility, and above all, the plan of attaching the interests of political or ecclesiastical parties to the course of instruction or reading, have separately or conjunctly circumscribed the limits of the operation; so that the world, on the whole, is but little the wiser with all the attempts which have been made. The strongholds of ignorance, though not unassailed, remain to be carried. Carefully eschewing the errors into which these praiseworthy associations have fallen, I take a course altogether novel. Whatever may be my political principles, neither these nor any other which would be

destructive of my present views, shall ever mingle in my observations on the arrangements of civil society.' I concluded by notifying the species of subjects which would receive particular attention.

High as were my expectations, the success of the work exceeded them. In a few days there was, for Scotland, the unprecedented sale of thirty thousand copies; and shortly afterwards, when copies were consigned to an agent in London for dispersal through England, the sale rose to upwards of fifty thousand, at which it long remained. Some years afterwards, the circulation exceeded eighty thousand. To the best of my recollection, all the other cheap papers issued in Edinburgh immediately disappeared. In London, some also were dropped, but others sprung up in their stead. For a time, indeed, there was not a week which had not a new serial; but few of these candidates for public approval outlived the second or third number. So many began and never went farther, that a gentleman whom we happened to hear of possessed a large pile of first numbers of periodicals of which a second never appeared.

On the 31st of March 1832, being eight weeks after the commencement of *Chambers's Journal*, appeared the first number of the *Penny Magazine of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge*. We learn from Mr Charles Knight, its publisher, that the *Penny Magazine* was suggested to him on a morning in March, and that the Lord Chancellor (Brougham), who was waited on, cordially entered into the project, which was forthwith sanctioned by the Committee of the Society. The *Penny Magazine*, begun under such distinguished auspices, and which, as is understood, had a very large circulation, terminated unexpectedly in

1845; though not without having exerted, during its comparatively brief career, an influence, along with similar publications, in stimulating the growth of that cheap and wholesome literature which has latterly assumed such huge proportions.

Why the *Penny Magazine*, with its alleged success as regards circulation, its large array of artists and writers, and its body of distinguished patrons, should have perished so prematurely, while there were still considerable strongholds of ignorance to be attacked, no one has ever ventured to explain. A silence equally mysterious hangs over the close of the Useful Knowledge Society, the proceedings of which were so vigorously heralded and sustained by articles in the *Edinburgh Review*, that no one could say the association failed for want of recommendation from the highest literary quarters. In the absence of any explanations on the subject, it may be conjectured that with all the ability displayed, and the best intentions of every one concerned, the treatises of the Society were on the whole too technical and abstruse for the mass of operatives; they made no provision for the culture of the imaginative faculties; and, in point of fact, were purchased and read chiefly by persons considerably raised above the obligation of toiling with their hands for their daily bread. In a word, they may be supposed to have been distasteful to the popular fancy. If any other reason be wanted, it probably lay in the fact that a society cannot, as a rule, compete with private enterprise.

It is not my duty to sit as critic on aims and efforts not unlike my own. There are different ways of doing things, and it may happen that one is as good as another. All that need be said is, that it has been

a matter of congratulation, that *Chambers's Journal* owed nothing, in its inception or at any part of its career, to the special patronage or approval of any sect, party, or individual. And the same thing may be confidently affirmed of the numerous publications of one kind or other which we were afterwards enabled to prepare and issue in furthering the cause we had espoused. It is something to say with excusable pride, that in the whole proceedings of my brother and myself, we never courted the countenance or recommendation of any person or persons, or of any body of people, civil or religious; and after an experience of forty years, circumstances would point to the conclusion that this has not been the worst, besides being the least obsequious line of policy.

CHAPTER X.

THE CONDUCTING OF 'CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL.'

AS in the case of a dissolving view, when, as if by magic, a bleak wintry scene is transformed into a landscape glowing with the warmth and verdant garniture of summer, so, by the appearance of the *Journal*, and the wide popularity it secured, was there effected an agreeable and wholly unforeseen change on my own condition, and that of others connected with me. The revolution was abrupt, and of a kind not to be treated with indifference. The moderate and not very conspicuous business in which I had been engaged was immediately relinquished, in consequence of the absorbing and prospectively advantageous literary enterprise in which I had embarked; and removing to a central part of the town, new and enlarged premises were acquired. Until the fourteenth number of the work, Robert was only in the position of contributor. Then abandoning his separate professional relations, he became joint-editor, and also without pecuniary obligation was associated with me in the firm of W. & R. CHAMBERS.

Had *Chambers's Journal* been commenced in London, no mechanical difficulty would have been experienced. The case was very different in Edinburgh, where, at the

time, there were obstructions as regards both paper and printing. John Johnstone, a genial old man, husband of the authoress of *Clan Albyn*, and other novels, was a printer, and by him the work was for a time executed, as well as it could be in the circumstances. Other printers were afterwards employed, but their hand-presses, even with relays of men toiling night and day, proved altogether inadequate for the large impressions that were required. At length, a set of stereotype plates of each number was sent weekly to London, from which copies were printed for circulation in England; while from another set impressions were executed in Edinburgh by machines which we procured for the purpose. Steam settled the difficulty. The work was at first a sheet folio, subsequently the size was reduced to a quarto, and at last to an octavo form.

Entering on the comprehensive design of editing, printing, and publishing works of a popularly instructive and entertaining tendency, Robert and I were for a considerable length of time alone—our immediately younger brother, James, having, to our distress, died in February 1833—and such was the degree of mutual confidence between us, that not for the space of twenty-one years was it thought expedient to execute any memorandum of agreement.

Though unusual, the combination of literary labour with the business of printing and publishing is not without precedent. We may call to mind the examples set by Edward Cave, Samuel Richardson, and Robert Dodsley last century. We might, indeed, point to Sir Walter Scott in our own times; the only thing to be deplored in the case of that great man being, that he kept his connection with the printing establishment

of the Ballantynes a profound secret, through an apprehension of losing caste among his law friends, instead of avowedly, like Richardson, becoming the printer, as well as holder of the copyrights, of his own productions.

A happy difference, yet some resemblance, in character, proved of service in the literary and commercial union of Robert and myself. Mentally, each had a little of the other, but with a wide divergence in matters requisite as a whole. One could not have well done without the other. With mutual help there was mutual strength. All previous hardships and experiences seemed to be but a training in strict adaptation for the course of life opened up to us in 1832. Nothing could have happened better—a circumstance which may perhaps go a little way towards inspiring hopes and consolations among those who may be destined to pass through a similar ordeal.

The permanent hold on the public mind which the *Journal* fortunately obtained, was undoubtedly owing, in a very great degree, to the leading articles, consisting of essays, moral, familiar, and humorous, from the pen of my brother. My own more special duties were confined for the most part to papers having in view some kind of popular instruction, particularly as regards the young, whom it was attempted to stimulate in the way of mental improvement. There likewise fell to my share the general administration of a concern which was ever increasing in dimensions. In conducting the *Journal*, the object never lost sight of was not merely to enlighten, by presenting information on matters of interest, and to harmlessly amuse, but to touch the heart—to purify the affections; thus, if possible,

imparting to the work a character which would render it universally acceptable to families.

At no time was there any attempt to give pictorial illustrations of objects in natural history, the fine arts, or anything else. Without undervaluing the attractions of wood-cut engravings, the aims of the editors were in a different direction. Their desire, it will be perceived, was to cultivate the feelings as much as the understanding. Hence the endeavour to revive, in a style befitting the age, the essay system of last century. In this effort, it may be allowable to say that Robert was eminently successful. His own explanations on the subject, embraced in the preface to a collection of his essays (published in 1847), are worthy of being quoted:

'It was in middle life that I was induced to become an essayist, for the benefit of a well-known periodical work established by my elder brother. During fifteen years I have laboured in this field, alternately gay, grave, sentimental, philosophical, until not much fewer than four hundred separate papers have proceeded from my pen. These papers were written under some difficulties, particularly those of a provincial situation, and a life too studious and recluse to afford much opportunity for the observation of social characteristics. Yet perhaps these restraints have had some good effect on the other hand, in making the treatment of subjects less local and less liable to the accidents of fashion than it might otherwise have been. One ruling aim of the author must be taken into account: it was my design from the first to be the essayist of the middle class—that in which I was born, and to which I continued to belong. I therefore do not treat their manners and habits as one looking *de haut en bas*, which is the usual style of essayists, but as one looking round among the firesides of my friends. For their use I shape and sharpen

my apothegms; to their comprehension I modify any philosophical disquisitions on which I have entered. Everywhere I have sought less to attain elegance or observe refinement, than to avoid that last of literary sins—dullness. I have endeavoured to be brief—direct; and I know I have been earnest. As to the sentiment and philosophy, I am not aware that any particular remark is called for. The only principles on which I have been guided are, as far as I am aware, these: whatever seems to me just, or true, or useful, or rational, or beautiful, I love and honour—wherever human woe can be lessened, or happiness increased, I would work to that end—wherever intelligence and virtue can be promoted, I would promote them. These dispositions will, I trust, be traced in my writings.'

The year that saw the beginning of *Chambers's Journal*, brought gloom over the literary world. After an unavailing search for health in the south of Europe, Sir Walter Scott returned to Abbotsford in the course of the summer—to die. The scene was gently closed on the 21st September 1832. The funeral of this illustrious Scotsman was appointed to take place on Wednesday the 26th. Among the very few mourners from Edinburgh who attended were my brother and myself. In a vehicle procured for the purpose, we followed in the long funereal procession from Abbotsford, through the villages of Darnick and Melrose, and along the picturesque road which, amidst hedgerows, conducts to the umbrageous precincts of Dryburgh. All business was suspended in the neighbourhood. At every side-avenue and opening, stood a group of villagers, all apparently impressed with a proper sense of the occasion. We felt as if taking part in a historical pageant, amidst scenery for ever embalmed in ballad and legend. At every successive turn of the way appeared some object which Scott had

either loved because it was the subject of former song, or rendered memorable by his own immortal verse. On reaching the vicinity of Smailholm Tower, the scene of his childhood was brought, after all the transactions of a mighty and glorious life, into the same prospect as his grave. The spectacle presented at the final solemnity—the large concourse of mourners clustered under the trees and near the ruins of the abbey, the sonorous reading of the funeral-service amidst the silent crowd, and the gloomy atmosphere overhead—is one never to be forgotten. Few among those present felt more acutely than my brother; and when the coffin was lowered into the tomb, his heart swelled with uncontrollable emotion.

Indebted to Sir Walter for so many kindnesses some years previously, and in correspondence with him till the close of 1831, my brother felt that he had lost his most honoured friend. Almost immediately, he proceeded to write a memoir of the deceased, from such materials as were within reach, as well as from personal recollections. The memoir was issued by us in a popular form, and had an extraordinary sale—as many as a hundred and eighty thousand copies.* It is referred to in the following correspondence which my brother opened with Allan Cunningham.

'19 Waterloo Place, Edinburgh,
October 11, 1832.

'Sir—Conceiving that a proper opportunity has at length arrived, I venture thus to break the charm—for such it almost seems—which has so long kept you and me un-

* This memoir has been revised and reissued—*Life of Sir Walter Scott*, by Robert Chambers, LL.D., with 'Abbotsford Notanda,' by Robert Carruthers, LL.D. (1871).

acquainted with each other. Permit me, upon the strength of our common regard for Scotland and her native literature, to introduce myself to you, as the writer of a life of Sir Walter Scott, just published in London and Edinburgh, in connection with the journal conducted by my elder brother and myself, and which, I am afraid, must interfere a little with the success of your similar attempt in the *Athenæum*. However these publications may jostle each other, there is no necessity for the authors being spited at each other on that account. I yield to your work the palm of eloquent writing and poetical feeling, but my superior opportunities have consoled me a little for that on the score of more information, and also, perhaps, correctness as to facts. I shall direct a copy of a second edition, in which there are a few corrections, to be enclosed for you, so that you may have the means of correcting your own work by it, in the event of its appearing in any other shape. I also shall either now send, or send soon, a volume of which I shall beg your acceptance, as a mark of my esteem and admiration. It is a selection of the Scottish ballads, in which many new ones are made out by piecing fragments together, and here and there adding a line or a verse. I look upon this work as my best out of some five-and-twenty volumes ; but such is the apathy of the public to this beautiful kind of poetry, that no work of mine has been so little heard of. It cost me exactly a month's work, though of course I could not have done it in so short a time, if I had not been a profound student of the native legendary poetry from my youth up. Permit me to take this opportunity of expressing my admiration of your numerous efforts in this branch of composition. I think there is no kind of poetry that could make such an impression on youthful minds as your early ballads, which are published by Cromek. I have often regretted that you confined yourself to such a limited set of ideas and localities. You know you have quite tired me of Criffel and Solway, but you know best how your bonnet fits you. Still, I cannot but wonder that you have

not attempted to make something of modern society, and of the scene in which you have spent so many of the latter years of your life.—Believe me, sir, though personally unknown to you, your sincere friend and fellow-countryman,

ROBERT CHAMBERS.

'ALLAN CUNNINGHAM, Esq.
London.'

To this letter came the following genial reply:

'27 LOWER BELGRAVE PLACE,
27th October 1832.

'MY DEAR SIR—Your letter was a welcome one. It is written with that frank openness of heart which I like, and contains a wish, which was no stranger to my own bosom, that we should be known to each other. You must not suppose that I have been influenced in my wish by the approbation with which I know your works have been received by your country. It is long since I took to judging in all matters for myself, and the *Picture of Scotland* and the *Traditions of Edinburgh*, both of which I bought, induced me to wish Robert Chambers among my friends. There was, perhaps, a touch or so of vanity in this—your *poetic*, *ballad-scrap*, *auld-world*, *new-world*, *Scottish* tastes and feelings seemed to go side for side with my own. Be so good, therefore, as send me your promised *Book of Ballads*, and accept in return, or rather in token of future *regard*, active and not passive, my *Rustic Maid of Elvar*, who has made her way through reform pamphlets and other rubbish, like a lily rising through the clods of the spring. There's a complimentary simile in favour of myself and my book! You must not, however, think ill of it because I praise it; but try and read it, and tell me what you feel about it.

'I have been much pleased with your account of Sir Walter Scott: it wears such an air of truth, that no one can refuse credence to it, and is full of interesting facts and just observations. I have no intention of expanding, or even of

correcting, my own hasty and inaccurate sketch. Mr Lockhart will soon give a full and correct life of that wonderful man to the world. The weed which I have thrown on his grave—for I cannot call it a flower—may wither as better things must do. Some nine thousand copies were sold; this we consider high, though nothing comparable, I know, to the immense sale of *Chambers's Journal*. I am truly glad of your great circulation; your work is by a thousand degrees the best of all the latter progeny of the press. It is an original work, and while it continues so must keep the lead of the paste and scissors productions. My wife, who has just returned from Scotland, says that your *Journal* is very popular among her native hills of Galloway. The shepherds, who are scattered there at the rate of one to every four miles square, read it constantly, and they circulate it in this way: the first shepherd who gets it reads it, and at an understood hour places it under a stone on a certain hill-top; then shepherd the second in his own time finds it, reads it, and carries it to another hill, where it is found like Ossian's chief under its own gray stone by shepherd the third, and so it passes on its way, scattering information over the land.

'My songs, my dear sir, have all the faults you find with them, and some more. The truth is, I am unacquainted with any other nature save that of the Nith and the Solway, and I must make it do my turn. I am like a bird that gathers materials for its nest round its customary bush, and who sings in his own grove, and never thinks of moving elsewhere. The affectations of London are as nothing to me; in my *Lives of the Painters*, I have, however, escaped from my valley, and on other contemplated works I hope to shew that though I sing in the charmed circle of Nithsdale, I can make excursions in prose out of it, and write and think like a man of the world and its ways.—I remain, my dear sir, with much regard, yours always,

ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.

'To ROBERT CHAMBERS, Esq.'

It was gratifying for us, as editors of *Chambers's Journal*, to receive the approbation and good wishes of so prodigious a popular favourite as 'Honest Allan,' for, independently of the wide circulation of the work, his good word was an assurance that the principles on which it had been started and inflexibly maintained, were commendable. It will now seem strange to mention, that the success of this unassuming periodical led to a species of persecution. On all hands we were beset with requests to give it the character of a 'religious publication.' It was in vain for us to state that that was not our rôle; that our work was addressed to persons of all shades of thinking, religious and secular, and that we could not, without violation of our original profession, take a side with any one in particular. We only got abused, and were called names. The era of this species of persecution, for such it was, however grotesque and ridiculous, extended for nearly twenty years after the commencement of the work; and we had often cause to be amused with the unreasonableness of the demands which were preferred, also to wonder if others in like circumstances were similarly assailed.

On one occasion we were impelled to address our readers, partly in explanation of the reasons for maintaining the principles on which the *Journal* was established. Some passages may be quoted as specifying the literary charter of the work:

'With so many good results before us, it would surely be unwise were we to alter our plans in order to please the fancies of any sect, party, or individual. It is our firm conviction that any attempt to do so would be attended by failure. The many would be lost for the sake of the few who would be gained, and the work

would soon dwindle into deserved insignificance. So much we say in all friendliness to those who seem inclined to fasten upon us functions for which we have no vocation. No, no; we must decline usurping the mission of the politician and the divine; we must leave the newspaper and the evangelical magazine to follow out their respective aims. To us, be it enough that we hold by the original charter of our constitution. *Chambers's Journal* shall never be written for this or that country, nor to meet this or that fashion of opinion, but remain to the end what it has been from the beginning—a Literary Miscellany, aspiring to inculcate the highest order of morals, universal brotherhood, and charity; to present exalted views of Creative Wisdom and Providential Care; and to impart correct, or, at all events, earnest and carefully formed, ideas on subjects of economic or general concern; endeavouring at the same time to raise no false expectations, to outrage no individual opinion, and to keep out of sight everything that would set mankind by the ears.'

While resolutely holding to our appointed course, the establishment of rival publications less or more differing from our own in character—some of them religious, or colourably so—was so far from giving us uneasiness, that we ever hailed them as coadjutors, all labouring for the public good in their respective vocations; for it is only by such varied means that every department of the community can be reached. In April 1834, Leigh Hunt set on foot the *London Journal*, which the editor, in his address, spoke of as being 'similar in point of size and variety to *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, but with a character a little more southern and literary.' Now that Mr Hunt and my brother have both

passed away, it is more than ever pleasing to peruse the correspondence that took place between them on the subject of this new claimant for popular favour. My brother wrote as follows :

'EDINBURGH, *April* 15, 1834.

'DEAR SIR—I take leave to address you in this familiar manner for several reasons. The chief is your kind nature, as exemplified in your writings, which prove you the friend of all mankind ; the lesser are, your allusions, on more occasions than one, to writings of mine, when you did not perhaps know the exact name of the author. My purpose is to congratulate you on the first number of your *Journal*, which I have just seen, and to express my earnest and sincere hope that it will repay your exertions, and render the latter part of your life more prosperous than you say the earlier has been. You will perhaps appreciate my good wishes the more that they proceed from an individual who, according to vulgar calculations, might expect to be injured by your success. I assure you, so far from entertaining any grudge towards your work on that score, I am as open to receive pleasurable impressions from it as I have ever been from your previous publications, or as the least literary of your readers can be ; and as hopeful that it will succeed and prove a means of comfort to you, as the most ancient and familiar of your friends. I know that your work can never do, by a tenth part, so much ill to my brother and myself as it may do good to you—for every book, however similar to others, finds in a great measure new channels for itself ; and still more certain am I, that the most jealous and unworthy feelings we could entertain, would be ineffectual in protecting us from the consequences of your supplanting our humble sheets in the public favour. My brother and I feel much pleasure in observing that a writer so much our senior, and so much our superior, should have thought our plan to such an extent worthy of his adoption, and hope your doing so will only furnish additional proof of the justice of our

calculations. This leads me to remark, that, while I acknowledge the truth of your pretensions to having been the reviver of the periodical literature of a former age, and have looked to your manner of treating light subjects as in part the model of our own, I must take this and every other proper opportunity of asserting my elder brother's merit, as the originator of cheap respectable publications, of the class to which your *Journal* is so important an addition. In the starting of *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, in February 1832, he was unquestionably the first to develop this new power of the printing-press; and considering that we had some little character (at least in Scotland) to lose, and encountered feelings in our literary brethren little less apt, I may say, to deter us from our object than the terrors which assailed Rodolph in the Witch's Glen (a simile more expressive than it is apt), I humbly conceive that, when the full utility of my brother's invention shall have been perceived by the world, as I trust it will in time, he will be fully entitled to have his claims allowed without dispute.

'That we have regretted to find ourselves the objects of so many of the meaner order of feelings among our brethren, it would be vain to deny. I must say, however, that we would have been ill to satisfy indeed, if the admission of our weekly sheet into almost every family of the middle rank, and many of the lower throughout the country, had not more than compensated us for that affliction. Our labours, moreover, are profitable beyond our hopes, beyond our wants, besides yielding to us a ceaseless revenue of pleasure, in the sense they convey to us of daily and hourly improving the hearts and understandings of a large portion of our species. That you may aim as heartily at this result, and be as successful in obtaining it, is the wish of, dear sir, your sincere friend and servant,

ROBERT CHAMBERS.

'TO LEIGH HUNT, Esq.'

There was a reply, lively and characteristic, a copy of

which appeared in the fourth number of the *London Journal*, being introduced with some complimentary remarks:

'4 Upper Cheyne Row, Chelsea,
April 21, 1834.

'My dear Sir—I should have sooner acknowledged the receipt of your kind and flattering letter, had I not, in the midst of a great press of business, been answering it in another manner through the medium of the *London Journal*, in the columns of which I have taken the liberty of putting it. I hope you will excuse this freedom, which I could not have taken with you had I respected you less; and I trust I have anticipated any delicacies you might have had on the point, by stating to the reader that you had given me no intimation as to whether I might so use it or not. But setting aside other reasons for this step—injurious, I trust, to neither of us—it appeared to me too good a thing for the public to lose, as an evidence of the new and generous good-will springing up among reflecting people, and specially fit to be manifested by those who make it their business to encourage reflection. It would have been like secreting a sunbeam—a new warmth—a new smile for the world. Nor will you think this image hyperbolical, when you consider the effect which such evidence must have upon the world, however your modesty might incline you to deprecate it personally. Mankind, in ignorance of the sweet and bright drop of benevolence which they all more or less carry in their hearts, ready to bathe and overflow it in good time, have been too much in the habit of returning mistrust for mistrust, and doubting every one else because each of themselves was doubted. Hence a world of heart-burnings, grudgings, jealousies, mischiefs, &c., till some even of the kindest people were ashamed to seem kind or to have better opinions of things than their neighbours. Think what a fine thing it is to help to break up this general ice betwixt men's hearts, and you will no longer have any doubt of the

propriety of the step I have taken, even supposing you to have had any before—which I hope not. I forgot to say one thing in my public remarks on your letter, which was, to express my hearty agreement with you as to the opinion that publications of this kind do no injury to one another. But this was implied in my address to the public in the first number, and I hope is self-evident. Most unaffectedly do I rejoice at hearing your own words confirm, and in so pleasant and touching a manner, the report of the great success of you and your brother in your speculation. I cannot pretend, after all that I have suffered, not to be glad to include a prospect of my own success in it, however it may fall short of its extent. Any kind of a bit of nest of retreat, with powers to send forth my young comfortably into the world, and to keep up my note of cheerfulness and encouragement to all ears while I have a voice left, is all that I desire for myself, or ever did. But in consequence of what I *have* suffered, and conscientiously suffered too, I claim a right to be believed when I say that I could rejoice in the success of other well-wishers to their species, apart from my own, and have often done so; and in this spirit, as well as the other, I congratulate you. That you and your brother may live long to see golden harvests of all sorts spring up from the seed you have sown, and to reap in consequence that "revenue of pleasure" you speak of, as well as the more ordinary one, is the cordial wish of, dear sir, yours faithfully,

LEIGH HUNT.

'To ROBERT CHAMBERS, Esq.'

No one could more regret than we did that Mr Hunt's literary venture was not permanently successful. At the sixty-second number, he united with his journal a periodical called the *Printing Machine*, at the same time raising the price from three-halfpence to twopence, and altering the day of publication. Changes of this

kind are hazardous, if not usually injurious. From whatever cause, the publication, as far as can be remembered, did not reach its hundredth number, although, from the quality of its contents, it merited a much longer existence.

How *Chambers's Journal* should have been so fortunate as secure a lasting success, while so many contemporary publications came prematurely to an end, is a point I can scarcely be expected to elucidate, further than by referring to the long series of popular essays by my brother, and to the sustained zeal with which the work was conducted. Robert and I had come through too many tribulations, and seen too vividly the consequence of lost chances of well-doing among those about us, now to trifle with the opportunity of honourable advancement which had been fortunately placed in our way. Week after week, year after year, there was with us, I may safely aver, no relaxation of vigilance—no treating of serious duties in the light of an amusement to be taken up and laid down at pleasure. And need I make the remark, after all that has been written first and last on the subject, that without this persistent earnestness of purpose, and it may be self-denial, no permanent success can be reckoned in any undertaking, whether literary or commercial?

CHAPTER XI.

RETROSPECT OF GENERAL WORK DONE.

LOOKING back to 1833, memory brings up recollections of Robert living in the bosom of a young family, in a home noted for its genial hospitality, as well as for certain evening parties, in which were found the most enjoyable society and music: his wife seated at the harp or pianoforte, which he accompanied with his flute—the old flute which had long ago sounded along the Eddleston Water, and had been preserved through many vicissitudes; the entertainment being sometimes varied by the tasteful performances of worthy old George Thomson—Burns's Thomson—on the violin: my mother living with the junior members of the family in the composure and comfort which she had so meritoriously earned: and I settled in my newly-married life. Such was the position of affairs. All the surroundings agreeable.

The sad thing in these recollections is, that so many who composed our general society, and figured among the notables of the period, have passed from the stage of existence. A lady with whom we formed an intimacy, and who greatly enjoyed these evening parties, was Mrs Maclehose, the celebrated 'Clarinda' of Robert Burns.

Now a widow in the decline of life, short in stature, and of a plain appearance, with the habit of taking snuff, which she had inherited from the fashions of the eighteenth century, one could hardly realise the fact of her being that charming Clarinda who had taken captive the heart of 'Sylvander,' and of whom he frenziedly wrote, on being obliged to leave her:

> 'She, the fair sun of all her sex,
> Has blest my glorious day;
> And shall a glimmering planet fix
> My worship to its ray?'

Vastly altered since she was the object of this adoration, Clarinda still possessed a singular sprightliness in her conversation, and, what interested us, she was never tired speaking of Burns, whose unhappy fate she constantly deplored.

Another of our acquaintances, but seen only at times when he came to town, was James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd. I saw him first at my brother's house in 1830, and was amused with his blunt simplicity of character and good-nature. It did not seem as if he had the slightest veneration for any one more than another whom he addressed, no matter what was their rank or position; and I could quite believe that he sometimes took the liberty, as is alleged of him, of familiarly addressing Sir Walter Scott as 'Watty,' and Lady Scott as 'Charlotte.' The Shepherd, however, was a genuinely good creature and agreeable acquaintance. On one occasion, he invited my brother and myself to what he called 'a small evening party,' at his inn in the Candlemaker Row, intimating, in an easy way, that we might bring any of our friends with us. We went accordingly. Some time afterwards, when

poor Hogg was no more, Robert gave an account, not in the least exaggerated, of this extraordinary entertainment, which may here be introduced as a specimen of the lighter class of articles in the early years of the *Journal.*

THE CANDLEMAKER-ROW FESTIVAL.

'The late James Hogg was accustomed, in his latter days, to leave his pastoral solitude in Selkirkshire once or twice every year, in order to pay a visit to Edinburgh. He would stay a week or a fortnight in the city, professedly lodging at Watson's Selkirk and Peebles Inn in the Candlemaker Row, but in reality spending almost the whole of his time in dining, supping, and breakfasting with his friends; for, from his extreme good-nature, and other agreeable qualities as a companion, not to speak of his distinction as a lion, his society was much courted. The friends whom he visited were of all kinds, from men high in standing at the bar to poor poets and slender clerks; and amongst all the Shepherd was the same plain, good-humoured, unsophisticated man as he had been thirty years before, when tending his flocks amongst his native hills. In the morning, perhaps, he would breakfast with his old friend Sir Walter Scott, at his house in Castle Street, taking with him some friend upon whom he wished to confer the advantage of an acquaintance with that great man. The forenoon would be spent in calls, and in lounging amongst the backshops of such booksellers as he knew. He would dine with some of the wits of *Blackwood's Magazine,* whom he would keep in a roar till ten o'clock; and then, recollecting another engagement, off he would set to some

fifth story in the Old Town, where a young tradesman of literary tastes had collected six or eight lads of his own sort to enjoy the humours of the great genius of the *Noctes Ambrosianæ.* In companies of this kind, he was treated with such homage and kindness, that he usually got into the highest spirits, sang as many of his own songs as his companions chose to listen to, and told such droll stories that the poor fellows were like to go mad with happiness. After acting as the life and soul of the fraternity for a few hours, he would proceed to his inn, where it was odds but he would be entangled in some further orgies by a few of the inmates of the house.

'The only uneasiness which the poet felt in consequence of his being so much engaged in visiting, was that it rendered his residence at Watson's little better than a mere affair of lodging, so that, in his reckoning, the charge for his bed bore much the same proportion to that for everything else which the sack bore to the bread in Falstaff's celebrated tavern bill. To remedy this in some degree, the honest Shepherd was accustomed to signalise the last night of his abode in the inn by collecting a vast crowd of his Edinburgh friends, of all ranks and ages and coats, to form a supper-party for the benefit of the house. In the course of the forenoon, he would make a round of calls, and mention, in the most incidental possible way, that two or three of his acquaintances were to meet that night in the Candlemaker Row at nine, and that the addition of this particular friend whom he was addressing, together with any of *his* friends he chose to bring along with him, would by no means be objected to. It may readily be imagined that, if he gave this hint to some ten or twelve individuals,

the total number of his visitors would not probably be few. In reality, it used to bring something like a Highland host upon him. Each of the men he had spoken to came, like a chief, with a long train of friends, most of them unknown to the hero of the evening, but all of them eager to spend a night with the Ettrick Shepherd. He himself stood up at the corner of one of Watson's largest bedrooms to receive the company as it poured in. Each man, as he brought in his train, would endeavour to introduce each to him separately, but would be cut short by the lion with his bluff good-humoured declaration: "Ou ay, we'll be a' weel acquent by and by."

'The first two clans would perhaps find chairs, the next would get the bed to sit upon; all after that, had to stand. This room being speedily filled, those who came subsequently would be shewn into another bedroom. When it was filled too, another would be thrown open, and still the cry was: "They come!" At length, about ten o'clock, when nearly the whole house seemed "panged" with people, as he would have himself expressed it, supper would be announced. Then such a rushing and thronging through the passages, up-stairs and down-stairs, such a tramping, such a crushing, and such a laughing and roaring withal—for, in the very anticipation of such a supper, there was more fun than is experienced at twenty ordinary assemblages of the same kind. All the warning Mr Watson had got from Mr Hogg about this affair was a hint, in passing out that morning, that *twae-three* lads had been speaking of supping there that night. Watson, however, knew of old what was meant by *twae-three*, and had laid out his largest room with a double range of tables, sufficient to

accommodate some sixty or seventy people. Certain preliminaries have in the meantime been settled in the principal bedroom. Mr Taylor, commissioner of police for the ward which contains the Candlemaker Row, is to take the chair—for a commissioner of police in his own ward is greater than the most eminent literary or professional person present who has no office connected with the locality. Mr Thomson, bailie of Easter Portsburgh, and Mr Gray, moderator of the Society of High Constables, as the next most important local officials present, are to be croupiers. Mr Hogg is to support Mr Taylor on the right, and a young member of the bar is to support him on the left.

'In then gushes the company, bearing the bard of Kilmeny along like a leaf on the tide. The great men of the night take their seats as arranged, while others seat themselves as they can. Ten minutes are spent in pushing and pressing, and there is after all a cluster of Seatless, who look very stupid and nonplussed till all is put to rights by the rigging out of a table along the side of the room. At length all is arranged; and then, what a strangely miscellaneous company is found to have been gathered together! Meal-dealers are there from the Grassmarket, genteel and slender young men from the Parliament House, printers from the Cowgate, and booksellers from the New Town. Between a couple of young advocates sits a decent grocer from Bristo Street; and amidst a host of shop-lads from the Luckenbooths, is perched a stiffish young probationer, who scarcely knows whether he should be here or not, and has much dread that the company will sit late. Jolly, honest-like bakers, in pepper-and-salt coats, give great uneasiness to squads of black coats in juxtaposition with

them; and several dainty-looking youths, in white neck-cloths and black silk eye-glass ribbons, are evidently much discomposed by a rough tyke of a horse-dealer who has got in amongst them, and keeps calling out all kinds of coarse jokes to a crony about thirteen men off on the same side of the table. Many of Mr Hogg's Selkirkshire store-farming friends are there, with their well-oxygenated complexions and Dandie-Dinmont-like bulk of figure; and in addition to all comers, Mr Watson himself, and nearly the whole of the people residing in his house at the time. If a representative assembly had been made up from all classes of the community, it could not have been more miscellaneous than this company, assembled by a man to whom, in the simplicity of his heart, all company seemed alike acceptable.

'When supper was finished, the chairman proceeded to the performance of his arduous duties. After the approved fashion in municipal and other public conviviality, he proposed, with all the honours, the King, the Royal Family, the Navy and Army, and all the other *loyal and patriotic toasts*, before he judged it fit to introduce *the toast of the evening*. He then rose and called for a real—a genuine bumper. "Gentlemen," said he, "we are assembled here this evening in honour of one who has distinguished himself in the poetical line; and it is now my pleasing duty to propose his health. Gentlemen, I could have wished to escape this duty, as I feel myself altogether incapable of doing justice to it; it is my only support in the trying circumstances in which I have been placed, that little can be required to recommend the toast to you. (Cheers.) Mr Hogg is an old acquaintance of mine, and I have read his works. He has had the merit of raising him-

self from a humble station to a high place amongst the literary men of his country. You have all felt his powers as a poet in his *Queen's Wake.* When I look around me, gentlemen, at the respectable company here assembled—when I see so many met to do honour to one who was once but a shepherd on a lonely hill—I cannot but feel, gentlemen, that much has been done by Mr Hogg, and that it is something fine to be a poet. (Great applause.) Gentlemen, the name of Hogg has gone over the length and breadth of the land, and wherever it is known, it is held as one of those which do our country honour. It is associated with the names of Burns and Scott, and, like theirs, it will never die. Proud I am to see such a man amongst us, and long may he survive to reap his fame, and to gratify the world with new effusions of his genius! Gentlemen, the health of Mr Hogg, with all the honours." The toast was accordingly drunk with great enthusiasm, amidst which the Shepherd rose to make his usual acknowledgment: "Gentlemen, I was ever proud to be called a poet, but I never was so proud as I am this nicht," &c.

'This part of the business over, the chairman and croupiers began to do honour to civic matters. The chairman gave the Magistrates of Edinburgh, to which Mr Thomson, one of the croupiers, felt himself bound to return thanks. Mr Thomson then gave the Commissioners of Police, which brought the chairman upon his legs. "Messrs Croupiers and Gentlemen," said he, "I rise, as a humble member of the body just named, to thank you, in the name of that body, and my own, for this unexpected honour. I believe I may say for this body, that they do the utmost in their power to

merit the confidence of their constituents, and that, if they ever fail in anything to give satisfaction, it is not for want of a desire to succeed. But let arithmetic speak for us. You all know that the police affairs of the city were formerly administered at an expense to you of no less than one-and-sixpence a pound on the valued rental. And you all know what a system it was, how negligent, inefficient, and tyrannical. Now, gentlemen, our popularly elected commission has been seven years in existence, during all which time we have watched, and lighted, and cleaned you at thirteenpence-halfpenny!" (Great and prolonged cheering.)

'There is now for two hours no more of Hogg. The commissioners, bailies, and moderators have the ball at their foot, and not another man can get in a word. Every imaginable public body in the city, from the University to the Potterrow Friendly Society, is toasted, most of them with the honours. Then they come to individuals. A croupier proposes the chairman, and the chairman proposes the croupiers. One of the latter gentlemen has a gentleman in his eye, to whom the public has been much indebted, and whose presence is always acceptable, and after a long preamble of panegyric, out comes the name—the honoured name of Mr John Jaap, ex-resident commissioner of police for the next ward. It is all in vain for Mr Hogg's literary or professional friends to raise their voices amidst such a host of bourgeoisie. The spirit of the Candlemaker Row and Bristo Street rules the hour, and all else must give way, as small minorities ought to do. Amidst the storm of civic toasts, a little thickish man, in a faded velvet waistcoat and strong-ale nose,

rises with great solemnity, and, addressing the chair, begs leave to remind the company of a very remarkable omission which has been made. "Gentlemen," said he, "I am sure, when I mention my toast, you will all feel how much we have been to blame in delaying it so long. It is a toast, gentlemen, which calls in a peculiar manner for the sympathies of us all. It is a toast, gentlemen, which I am sure needs no recommendation from me, but which only requires to be mentioned in order to call up all that feeling which such a toast ever ought to call up—a toast, gentlemen, a toast such as seldom occurs. Some, perhaps, are not aware of an incident of a very interesting nature which has taken place in the family of one of our worthy croupiers this morning. It has not yet been announced in the papers, but it probably will be so to-morrow. In the meantime I need only say—'Mrs Gray, of a daughter.' (Cheering from all parts of the house.) On such an occasion, gentlemen, you will not think me unreasonable if I ask you to get up, and drink, with all the honours, a bumper to Mrs Gray and her sweet and interesting charge." (Drunk with wild joy by all present.)

'About two o'clock in the morning, after the second reckoning has been called and paid by general contribution, Mr Taylor leaves the chair, which is taken by the young advocate. Other citizenly men, including the croupiers, soon after glide off, not liking to stay out late from their families. As the company diminishes in number, it increases in mirth, and at last the extremities of the table are abandoned, and the thinned host gathers in one cluster of intense fun and good-fellowism around the chair. Hogg now shines out for

the first time in all his lustre, tells stories, sings, and makes all life and glee. The *Laird o' Lamington*, the *Women Folk*, and *Paddy O'Rafferty*, his three most comic ditties, are given with a force and fire that carries all before it. About this time, however, the reporters withdraw, so that it is not in our power to state any further particulars of the Candlemaker-Row Festival.

. . . . .

'The Shepherd now reposes beneath the sod of his native Ettrick, all the sorrows and joys of his checkered career hushed with his own breath, and not a stone to point pale Scotia's way, to pour her sorrows o'er her poet's dust.* While thus recalling, for the amusement of an idle hour, some of the whimsical scenes in which we have met James Hogg, let it not be supposed that we think of him only with a regard to the homely manners, the social good-nature, and the unimportant foibles, by which he was characterised. The world amidst which he moved was but too apt, especially of late years, to regard him in these lights alone, forgetting that, beneath his rustic plaid, there beat one of the kindest and most unperverted of hearts, while his bonnet covered the head from which had sprung *Kilmeny* and *Donald Macdonald*. Hogg, as an untutored man, was a prodigy, much more so than Burns, who had had comparatively a good education; and now that he is dead and gone, we look around in vain for a living hand capable of awaking the national

* Since this was written, a monument to James Hogg has been erected in the Vale of Yarrow, at the head of St Mary's Loch, a few miles from what had latterly been his residence.

lyre. The time will probably come when this inspired rustic will be more justly appreciated.'

Sketches of this kind in a small unpretentious periodical which affected no connection with the celebrities of literature were unusual, and came upon the public in the nature of a surprise. On very ordinary topics, Robert, happily, brought to bear humour and pathos in a way to excite the interest as well as the sympathy of readers; even when treating of what was reprehensible, he considerately made allowance for human failings, and leant to the side of gentle forbearance.

The continued and very extraordinary success of *Chambers's Journal* brought on, as if by natural sequence, fresh enterprises, to which, with some assistance, we could give proper attention. In 1833, we projected and issued the work styled *Chambers's Information for the People.* It consisted of a series of sheets, on subjects in which distinct information is of importance among the people generally—such as the more interesting branches of science, physical, mathematical, and moral; natural history, political history, geography, and literature; together with papers on fireside amusements and miscellaneous topics considered to be of popular interest. As latterly improved, the work is comprehended in two octavo volumes illustrated with wood-engravings. First and last, its sale has amounted to upwards of a hundred and seventy thousand sets—very nearly two millions of sheets. How far the diffusion of this enormous quantity of popularised knowledge at a small price may have proved beneficial, it is not for us to say. The work was reprinted in the United States, but with what success we never heard. With some changes of subject,

a translation appeared in Paris under the title of *Instruction pour le Peuple.* There was also a translation of a portion of the work into Welsh by Ebenezer Thomas, or Eben the Bard, a person of no mean celebrity in Wales.

Next, in 1835, was announced and begun a literary undertaking very much more onerous and elaborate. This was *Chambers's Educational Course*, consisting of a series of treatises and school-books, constructed according to the most advanced views of education, both as a science and an art. In the series of books which followed, was comprehended a section on physical science, the first time, as far as we were aware, of anything of the kind having been attempted in a form addressed to common understandings. Of the series of books my brother wrote several, including *History of the British Empire*, and *History of the English Language and Literature*, this being the first time that anything of the kind had been attempted as a class-book. The series now extends to upwards of a hundred volumes, the diffusion of which has been greater than I care to particularise.

To acquire some knowledge of the state of education, and the nature of the treatises employed, in the kingdom of the Netherlands, I made a deliberate journey through that country in 1838, visiting the schools in the principal towns. What fell under notice was described in a *Tour in Holland and the Rhine Countries* (1839), and it vindicated the plan which had been adopted in constructing our *Educational Course* free of matter that could lead to controversy. No more need be said of the *Course* than that it met with a friendly reception at home and in the colonies, and that this acceptability is still increasing.

Writing to his old friend Wilson at Poughkeepsie in

1835, my brother says: 'I am continuing to pursue that course of regular plodding industry which you have witnessed since its commencement. Personally, I have now hardly anything to do with business, but I participate with my elder brother in the great advantage of uniting the duties of a publisher with those of an author. Of the *Journal*, about sixty thousand are now sold; and in England the circulation is steadily rising. That work seems now indeed received and sanctioned as a powerful moral engine for the regeneration of the middle and lower orders of society. We have just commenced the publication of a series of educational works, designed to embrace education—physical, moral, and intellectual—according to the most advanced views. To all appearance, this will also be a successful undertaking. While my brother has been married two years without any surviving children, I have now no fewer than four. . . . We all enjoy good health; and I often think I realise in my domestic circle that happiness which authors have endeavoured to represent as visionary. Men, it is allowed, are apt to speak of things as they find them; and, for my part, I would say that it is possible to lead the life of a literary man without any of those grievances and evil passions which others picture as inseparable from the profession. I envy none, despise none, but, on the contrary, yield due respect to all, whether above or beneath me. I am but little disposed to pine for higher honours than I possess: they come steadily, and I am content to wait till they come. The result is, that hardly such a thing as an annoyance ever breaks the calm tenor of my life, and that there is not one person with whom I was ever acquainted whom I cannot meet as a friend.'

From 1835 to 1837, as is seen by my brother's papers, he was in pretty frequent communication with Hugh Miller on literary subjects. Settled at Cromarty as an assistant in a bank, Miller had some spare time on his hands, which he wished to devote to writing stories and other articles for *Chambers's Journal;* the reading of that periodical having apparently been to him a means of mental stimulus. Limits, unfortunately, do not admit of the insertion of Miller's letters in full. In one, dated 19th March 1835, he refers to the difficulties he had encountered in acquiring a facility in writing for the press:

'Oblige me by accepting the accompanying volume. It contains, as you will find, a good many heavy pieces, and abounds in all the faults incident to juvenile productions, and to those of the imperfectly taught; but you may here and there meet with something to amuse you. I have heard of an immensely rich trader who used to say he had more trouble in making his first thousand pounds than in making all the rest. I have experienced something similar to this in my attempts to acquire the art of the writer—but I have not yet succeeded in making my first thousand. My forthcoming volume, which I trust I shall be able to send you in a few weeks, will, I hope, better deserve your perusal. And yet I am aware it has its heavy pieces too—dangerous-looking sloughs of dissertation in which I well-nigh lost myself, and in which I had no small risk of losing my readers. One who sits down to write for the public at a distance of two hundred miles from the capital, has to labour under sad disadvantages in his attempts to catch the tone which chances to be popular at the time; more especially, if, instead of having formed his literary tastes in that tract of study which all the educated classes have to pass through, he has had to pick them up by himself in nooks and by-corners where scarcely any one ever picked them up before.

Among educated men, the starting-note, if I may so express myself, is nearly the same all the world over, and what wonder if the after-tones should harmonise; but alas for his share of the concert who has to strike up on a key of his own. . . . All my young friends here, and I have a great many, are highly delighted with your volume of Ballads.'

Some years later, Mr Miller made distinct overtures to be a contributor. Under date 14th September 1837, he writes:

'I have been a reader of your *Journal* for the last five years—a pleased and interested reader; and a few days ago the thought struck me that, so far at least as one contributor goes, I might also be a writer for it. . . . I have been writing a good deal of late—mostly stories; but the vehicle in which I have given them to the public' [a collection of tales] 'does not quite satisfy me. Some of my brother-contributors are rather more stupid than is agreeable in one's associates; and besides, there is less pleasure in writing sense in the name of another than in one's own. Every herring should hang by its own head. May I ask you, without presuming too far on your good-nature and the kindness you have already shewn me, to read one or two of my stories, and say at your convenience whether I might not find some way of disposing of such to better advantage. . . . . I send you also a copy of verses which I addressed about two years ago to a lady, who has since become my wife. I do not know that they have much else besides their sincerity to recommend them, but sincerity they have. It is, I believe, Cowper who tells us that "the poet's lyre should be the poet's heart."'

The articles sent were duly acknowledged and inserted. Others followed in 1838, chiefly of familiar papers on geology. It is one of the things to look back upon with gratification, that Hugh Miller had

been, not only an early reader of, but a contributor of interesting papers to, *Chambers's Journal.*

Shortly after this period, considerable additions were made to our establishment, to meet the requirements of an ever-growing business. It is not the purpose, however, of the present Memoir to diverge into any account of the various enterprises in which we happened to engage. Only two may be mentioned as peculiarly furthering the distribution of a cheap, and, as it was hoped, useful species of publications among the less affluent classes in the community. One of these undertakings was *Chambers's Miscellany of Useful and Entertaining Tracts*, a work completed in twenty volumes, adapted for parish, school, regimental, prison, and similar libraries. The circulation was immense; and to keep the work abreast of the age, it has recently undergone considerable revision.

The other of these enterprises was one which exceeded all former efforts. This was *Chambers's Encyclopædia, a Dictionary of Universal Knowledge for the People*—a work begun in 1859, and which continued to be issued till its completion in ten volumes in 1868. Unless with the assistance of a large and varied body of contributors, a book of this comprehensive nature could not have been attempted. This assistance was procured, and what was of greater importance, Dr Andrew Findlater entered with much spirit into our views, and brought his erudition and habits of assiduous literary labour into exercise as acting editor. For all parties, however, the task was herculean. In commencing the work, my brother and I felt excusable in describing it as our 'crowning effort in cheap and instructive literature.'

When we entered on the undertaking, it was

considerably more than a hundred years since Ephraim Chambers gave to the world his *Cyclopædia or Universal Dictionary of Knowledge*—the prototype, as it proved to be, of a number of similar works in Britain as well as in other countries, which must have contributed in no small measure to increase the sum of general intelligence. In nearly all these works there was a tendency to depart from the plan of their celebrated original, as concerns some of the great departments of science, literature, and history; these being usually presented, not under a variety of specific heads, as they commonly occur to our minds when information is required, but aggregated in large and formal treatises, such as in themselves form books of considerable bulk. By such a course, it is manifest that the serviceableness of an encyclopædia as a dictionary of reference is greatly impaired, whatever be the advantages which on other points are gained. The Germans, in their *Conversations Lexicon*, were the first to bring back the encyclopædia to its original purpose of a dictionary. The *Penny Cyclopædia* was another effort in the same direction, but it was extended to such dimensions as to put it out of the reach of the very classes for whom it was designed. Our object was to give a comprehensive yet handy and cheap Dictionary of Universal Knowledge; no subject being treated at greater length than was absolutely necessary. As now completed, it will be for the world to judge whether the work realises the object aimed at.

It would have been impossible to give concentrated attention to the various works mentioned, as well as to those of which Robert was exclusively the author or editor, without a proper organisation in one large establishment. As regards *Chambers's Journal*, we were

fortunate in having a succession of able and zealous literary assistants, to whom be every acknowledgment. So aided, and with twelve printing-machines and a variety of other apparatus set to work, there was at length a fair average produce of fifty thousand sheets of one kind or other daily. The concern might be called a great book factory, or perhaps more properly, a literary organisation, somewhat original in character. Under one roof were combined the operations of editors, compositors, stereotypers, wood-engravers, printers, bookbinders, and other labourers — all engaged in the preparation and dispersal of books and periodicals. The assemblage of so many individuals in various departments, actuated by a common purpose, suggested the idea of annual entertainments to all in our employment. The first of these entertainments, which had for its express object the promotion of a good feeling between employers and employed, took place in the summer of 1838. The meeting was in the form of a temperance soirée, with some slight refreshments and music. It was held in one of the large apartments of our printing-office; and to grace the assemblage, some persons of local distinction were invited. Among the notabilities who attended on the occasion were Lords Murray and Cunningham, also Mr James Simpson, a keen educationist, but best remembered for his amusing account of a visit to the field of Waterloo, shortly after the battle. Usually at these soirées there were about two hundred of all classes, and of both sexes, present—all in evening dress, and joyous for the occasion. In the intervals of the instrumental music, addresses were delivered, and songs were sung; on one occasion, as I have pleasure in remembering, George Thomson

delighted the company with the song of the 'Posie,' the warbling of which sent the mind back to 1792, when our national bard was pouring forth his matchless lyrics. The addresses on both sides were of that friendly nature which was calculated to promote a spirit of mutual amity not to be forgotten.

The presence of my mother was a pleasing feature at the earlier of these annual soirées. Now at an advanced age, but retaining her buoyancy of feelings, she entered sympathisingly into the spirit of the occasion. Grateful for many unexpected blessings, her existence drew placidly to a close. She died in 1843, having exemplified in her life the brightest virtues that can adorn the matronly character.

BURNS'S MAUSOLEUM, DUMFRIES.

CHAPTER XII.

ROBERT'S LATER WORKS—1842 TO 1865.

ALTHOUGH diligently engaged in conducting *Chambers's Journal*, and aiding me in considering matters requiring joint consideration, Robert did not desist from miscellaneous literary undertakings. With only intervals of indulgence in his cheerful social circle, he was constantly occupied—sometimes on papers for our periodical, sometimes on a book of an educational nature, and sometimes on miscellaneous works involving much thought and labour. Going off occasionally on an excursion to the west of Scotland, he completed, in conjunction with Professor Wilson, an elaborate work on the *Land of Burns*, which, extending to two highly embellished quarto volumes, is understood to have rewarded the enterprise of the publishers by whom it had been undertaken.

The success of his small educational book on English literature, led to the conception of a work vastly more comprehensive. He projected a *Cyclopædia of English Literature*, that should form a history, critical and biographical, of British authors, from the earliest to the present times, accompanied with a systematised series of extracts—a concentration of the best productions of

English intellect, headed by Chaucer, Shakspeare, Milton—by More, Bacon, Locke—by Hooker, Taylor, Barrow—by Addison, Johnson, Goldsmith—by Hume, Robertson, Gibbon—and more lately by Byron and Scott—*set* in a biographical and critical history of the literature itself. This was certainly no mean enterprise. The end which, if possible, was to be attained, was the training of an entire people to venerate the thoughtful and eloquent of the past and present times. 'These gifted beings,' it was justly observed, 'may be said to have endeared our language and institutions—our national character, and the very scenery and artificial objects which mark our soil—to all who are acquainted with, and can appreciate their writings.'

The work to be executed was the first of its kind. There existed various collected specimens from the writings of eminent British authors, with and without critical remarks, but until now nothing of a cyclopædic character had been attempted. It being impossible, with all my brother's self-sacrificing diligence, to execute so onerous a task single-handed, he besought and received the aid of his friend, Dr Robert Carruthers of Inverness, who, both by his literary tastes and professional pursuits, was eminently qualified to co-operate in the undertaking. Completed in two volumes octavo, and issued in 1844, the *Cyclopædia of English Literature* had a most successful career, and continues to be popular, not only for private reading, but as a book for the higher class of students. A new edition, considerably extended, was lately prepared by Dr Carruthers, and is now published.

In the framework of this work may be recognised the deep affection with which Robert regarded the

compositions of many of our popular writers. Speaking of these productions in a paper styled, 'What English Literature gives us,' he says truly: 'English literature gives all who can enjoy it a fund of pleasure, of the great amount of which we are not apt to be quite aware till we run over a few of the items. There are the Waverley Novels—in direct contemplation, only the talk of an old-fashioned Scotch gentleman, who died a few years ago—or, in a still more gross consideration, but a few masses of printed paper. Yet, in effect, what are they! To how many thousands upon thousands has life been made less painful or more delightful by these charming tales! The world would have gone on without them, no doubt, but it would not have gone on so agreeably. There would have been an infinite deal less happiness in it during the last twenty-five years, if they had not been written. How much has been done for our enjoyment even by one or two of the characters —Caleb Balderstone, for instance, or Dugald Dalgetty, or Dominie Sampson. These are ideal beings, but do we not feel positively richer by knowing them—by having it in our power at any time to call them up before our minds, and inwardly smile at what is ludicrous about them? In like manner, is it not a luxurious sympathy which we feel respecting the fortunes of Ravenswood, all imaginary as he is. These beings take their place among our acquaintance, and the most delightful of all acquaintance they are. We have only to take up a book, and lo! we mingle at once in their society, as if unconsciously carried into it through the air. Such books are as show-holes in the walls of this common world, through which to look into one full of the gay, the romantic, and the beautiful. The blind may be

slipped aside, and our eye applied, in the smokiest of cottages, as in the most gorgeous of palaces, and the fairy scene will be the same in each case. And we command the show at any time. It will lull us after the excitement and fatigues of labour, and it will beguile us of the languor of monotonous retirement and solitude. We may be sad or joyous, eager and full of hope, or mistrustful of all the good things of life; but our accidental mood is of no consequence when we have once fixed ourselves at the raree-show of the Waverley fictions, for then all of ourselves sinks, except the consciousness of great enjoyment.' And so on he runs over many of our popular prose and poetic fictions, pointing out their value as an imperishable inheritance.

Of Scottish songs and ballads, Robert had a voluminous collection, which he esteemed as a literary treasure. In 1844, while engaged on the *Cyclopædia*, he took a fancy for securing the airs to those Border ballads which were still uncollected. In this object he was aided by the singing of various ballads by persons acquainted with Liddesdale—one of them, the late John Shortrede of Jedburgh, a son of Sir Walter Scott's friend of that name. The result was the printing for private circulation of *Twelve Romantic Scottish Ballads, with the Original Airs*—a brochure now exceedingly scarce.

A general desire being expressed to possess my brother's essays and some other productions in a separate form, they were collected and published, 1847, under the title of *Select Writings*, in seven volumes, for which several characteristic illustrations were furnished by David Roberts, R.A., and others. A copy having been presented by the author to his friend, D. M. Moir—the 'Delta' of *Blackwood*—it was acknowledged as follows:

'Allow me to congratulate you on the publication of your *Select Writings*—a thing which you owe to yourself and your family, and of which both will have reason to be proud. . . . In these days of flash and fury, when a certain class of writers seem to think that a work is valuable only in as far as it departs from the regions of good taste and common sense, the essays will stand forth as a beacon to the unwary, and as a token that some minds have escaped the infection. Nor can I doubt that they will attain a large degree of popularity, which they deserve. In last night glancing through the volumes, I have again made myself more intimate with many old acquaintances—highly characteristic of Scotland and the author, and equally creditable to our "auld respectit mother," and to her son.'

It will probably be allowed that the essays comprehended in three volumes of these *Select Writings* were the most original of my brother's productions. In them were seen his depth of thought on moral and economic subjects, also his sense of humour, with power of discriminating character. Readers of *Chambers's Journal* will remember the recurring weekly pleasure of reading these essays: 'General Invitations,' 'The Pleasures of Unhappiness,' 'The House of Numbers,' 'The Unconfined,' 'Danger of Appearing Ill-used,' 'The Downdraught,' &c. In a preceding chapter, a specimen of the more humorous class of papers is given in 'The Candlemaker-Row Festival.'

The essay on the 'Danger of Appearing Ill-used,' was partly suggested by personal experiences. My brother and I had early discovered the advantage of taking everything in a placid, or at least unresentful spirit of endurance. Often we had occasion to laugh at, as well as compassionate, men who seriously injured themselves in general esteem by iterating troublesome complaints

of misusage; and felt convinced that, ill possibly as such persons had been treated, it would on the whole have been better for them to remain discreetly silent—a circumstance reminding us, that in the injunction, 'whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also,' there is wrapt up a sound philosophy which the world has been slow to recognise. Conversations with Robert on this subject, led him to write the essay in question, from which, for the sake of the advices it offers, a few passages may be quoted.

DANGER OF APPEARING ILL-USED.

'It is extremely dangerous for any one who wishes to make his way in the world, to appear ill-used—it is so sure to afford some presumption not quite favourable to him. The clever, the well-born, the wealthy, the agreeable—all whom nature or accident has placed in a situation to be looked up to or courted by their fellow-creatures—rarely have any occasion to describe themselves as ill-used. It is the opposite classes in general who are not well used by their fellow-creatures—the stupid and troublesome, because nobody can endure them; the poor and lowly, because nobody cares anything about them. Such has been the way of the world since its beginning, and all our associations are formed accordingly. Hence, when any one is heard complaining of being ill-used, he is more apt to be set down as one of the latter than of the former classes—a circumstance which may be in no respect discreditable to him, but which, nevertheless, is not likely to be favourable to his prospects. No matter how real may be the wrongs he has suffered, or how eminently entitled they may be to sympathy. Few have opportunities of becoming satisfied of their reality; and even if sympathy be extended, it does no good. The general impression is bad, and he finds too late that, by complaining of ill-usage, he has only put himself in the way of continuing to be ill-used.

'Of all the evils which arise from litigation, decidedly the worst is the effect which it sometimes has in putting men into the position of ill-used people. Most men who think themselves wronged by law and lawyers have the good sense to absorb the injury, and appear as if they felt it not. But there are a few natures which do not easily brook wrong. These persons, foolishly thinking to avenge or redress themselves by an appeal to the world, trumpet forth their injuries wherever they go, and make themselves intolerable to all around them, by long recitals of their case in all its details. They take on the character of ill-used people, and soon experience the natural consequences in the cold regards of their fellow-creatures. It is of course horridly base for those who once smiled upon them in prosperity, now to shun them in their adversity; but the plain truth is, that it is not in human nature long to endure a man who is always telling how ill he has been used.

'Let no one, then, who wishes to attain or preserve a respectable place in the world, ever appear as if he had been ill-used. If a young man of business, let him never tell that he has been cheated or worsted in any sort of way, for then he will appear as having been ill-used. If a young artist, let him never breathe a word as to the prejudice or ill-will of "that hanging committee," in putting his pictures up at the ceiling or down at the floor, for then he will be confessing that he has been ill-used. If a candidate for an office or place of any kind, let him carefully avoid all complaint as to the suppression of his testimonials, or the start allowed to his rivals in the canvass, for then he will be owning to ill-usage. If a wooer, let him utter no whisper of jilting or rejection, unless he be able to tell at the same moment with a cheerful face, that, while ill-used by one lady, he has been well-used by another. In short, let no man who values his prospects in this world, ever, by word, deed, or sigh, allow it to be supposed that he has ever been, is now, or believes he ever can be, ill-used.'

Whatever was the depth of thought required in the composition of Robert's essays, they were for the most part written at a sitting, and needed scarcely any correction. Many were composed at spare intervals in the course of a journey. One of his best articles was written off-hand in an inn at Dundee, while waiting an hour for a stage-coach to take him up the Carse of Gowrie. Perhaps in the whole round of his four to five hundred essays and sketches, none was more appreciated for the delicacy of its conceptions than one which he designated 'Idea of an English Girl.' It might almost be conjectured that his fanciful notions on this idyllic theme, had been partly suggested by the unaffected manners and happy looks of one or other of his own daughters. Essentially what is called a 'family man,' he experienced immense delight in the society of his children, who were treated with the utmost tenderness and consideration. Ultimately, he had eight daughters and three sons—the daughters charming girls, most of them with flaxen ringlets, all with pet names, and so merry and entertaining, that their presence shed a continual sunshine through the dwelling. Clustered round their mother, Mrs R. Chambers, a woman of brilliant musical powers, much vivacity, and of literary tastes—the 'Mrs Balderston' of a number of amusing essays—the evening musical parties were now more enjoyable than ever; for, by way of variety, the girls in their childish glee would sing together some droll and lively ditty, to the delight of the company. For some purpose connected with his young family, my brother removed to St Andrews; his residence being a villa called Abbey Park, prettily situated outside the town. While here in 1843, he interspersed his usual literary

occupations with writing pieces of verse concerning his children—the daughters, of course, coming in for the largest share of these rhyming fancies.

In 1840, Robert was elected a member of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, from which time to 1850 he carried on an extensive epistolary correspondence with men of literary and scientific repute; and at this period he often visited London, where he mingled in the society of men of letters. His mind had become occupied with speculative theories which brought him into communication with Sir Charles Bell, George Combe, his brother Dr Andrew Combe, Dr Neil Arnott, Professor Edward Forbes, Dr Samuel Brown, and other thinkers on physiology and mental philosophy. Of Sir Charles Bell, he says in a note, on hearing of the sudden death of that eminent surgeon and physiologist (1842): 'Sir Charles was my father at the Royal Society —a most ingenious, excellent man.' He had likewise, in a more particular manner, acquired a fancy for geological investigations, which introduced him to another class of inquirers. Returning to Edinburgh, and residing at Doune Terrace, his house was open to all strangers of literary or scientific tastes who were pleased to visit him; and he now may be said to have acquired a wide circle of acquaintances. His conversaziones at this period will still be remembered. Often they had some specific object, such as shewing antiquities of historical interest, and saying something regarding them for the amusement of the guests; or of discussing some curious point in geology that had lately been exciting remark—for example, the traces of glacial action disclosed on the face of a huge boulder by the cutting of the Queen's Drive on Arthur's Seat. With such

phenomena as this he was familiar, as is seen by his communications to the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

My brother took up geology, not as a plaything, but as a matter to be pursued with his usual quiet earnestness of purpose. He went off from time to time on trips to different parts of England, Scotland, and Ireland; his explorations, however, being confined in a great measure to the sea-coast, the shores of lakes, and banks of rivers, in order to trace the mutations that had in the course of ages taken place on the earth's surface, as regards the relative level of sea and land.

These excursions in quest of 'raised beaches,' resembling artificial terraces on the face of hills and rising grounds at some hundreds of feet above the present surface of the ocean, were carried on with a steady enthusiasm for a series of years. He, in particular, took much interest in elucidating the character of the 'parallel roads of Glenroy,' which, by inveterate legend, had been represented as pathways constructed for the Fingallian heroes. Pennant thought it probable that the country people were right in entertaining this legendary notion. Playfair considered that the 'roads' were the remains of ancient aqueducts. Dr Macculloch, followed by Sir Thomas Dick Lauder, endeavoured to explain that they were produced by fresh-water lakes which from time to time had burst out. By M. Agassiz, Dr Buckland, and Mr Lyell, the 'roads' were imputed to glacial action. Mr Darwin pronounced them to be a result of upheaval of the land. This theory met with a formidable challenge from Mr David Milne (now Mr Milne-Home), who very satisfactorily shewed that the 'roads' were markings left by successive retrocessions of the sea at an early period of the earth's history.

Such views coincided with those of my brother, who, besides accompanying Mr Milne on some of his explorations, went alone to Glenroy, and made minute investigations all over the district, as will be seen by his work, *Ancient Sea-Margins* (1848), in which the whole subject is treated with his usual lucidity.

To carry out the explorations which ensued in the above work, he was impelled to attempt a remedy for that ill-executed surgical operation on his feet shortly after his birth, and which had entailed years of suffering. A fresh operation performed by that eminent surgeon, Professor James Syme, proved altogether successful. Robert was ever afterwards able to encounter the fatigues incidental to pedestrian excursions, and to go with more cheerfulness into general society.

He became an untiring advocate of the principles of life-assurance, on which subject he wrote a tract, in the form of a familiar dialogue, that, issued at a small price, had a circulation of several hundred thousand copies. The explanations offered did much to stimulate life-assurance among certain classes in the community; and of this we had numerous and gratifying proofs. Robert did not confine himself to theory. As an insurer for the benefit of his family, he connected himself with an eminently well-managed and trustworthy institution, the Scottish Equitable Life Assurance Society, in which he became a director, and regularly attended the meetings, unless when absent on his explorations.

On the occasion of an annual dinner of the directors of the Assurance Society, he had the misfortune, while on a geological excursion in Lanarkshire, to be detained at a small inn at Harestanes. To while away the very dreary evening, he wrote the following rhymed epistle,

addressed to W. S. Walker of Bowland, with whom, as a co-director, he should that day have dined :

EPISTLE BY A DISTRESSED DIRECTOR.

'My chair and my plate will be empty to-night
(Thus sadly an errant Director complains),
For while they are feasting o'er platters so bright,
Fate binds me to tea and a chop at Harestanes!

O Walker, be not at my absence offended,
'Tis I, and not you, who condolence may claim ;
Did you know but how sadly your colleague 's been stranded,
You would say that his stars, and not he, were to blame.

And did you but see him now scribbling forlorn,
With his one mutton candle that waves in the breeze,
In the worst inn's *best* room all so tattered and torn,
With its small fire within half an inch of his knees.

And did you but hear how the mail had deceived him,
How posting had failed like a dream in his clutch,
How for twice twenty hours disappointment had grieved him,
You would say he already is punished too much.

Nor yet is he sure that his troubles are ended.
From London he might in less time have come down ;
And should he not be by the night-coach befriended,
It may be half a week yet before he reach town.

So much for cross roads, and so much for long stages
(Thus musing our errant Director complains) ;
He could scarce wish Old Scratch, in his direst of rages,
A Tantalean evening thus spent at Harestanes!'

In his numerous excursions, whether connected with geology or objects of historical and antiquarian interest, Robert made many friends. One of these was the late John M'Diarmid, editor of the *Dumfries Courier*, Of this estimable literary man, my brother gleefully related an anecdote, which is here subjoined from his uncollected writings.

'Mr M'Diarmid is one of those ingenious writers who gather a fund of information by the means recommended by Sir Walter Scott in the Waverley Novels. Whenever he falls in with a stranger, he studies to learn what is his trade or bent of his mind. It does not matter who he is; he may be a nabob from India, or a saddler from Annan—that is all one. Within an hour, he has got everything out of him worth knowing. This practice is incessant and invariable on the part of the ingenious editor. To prove that it is so, we may mention an anecdote. Our lot was once so cast as to travel a week with M'Diarmid through Galloway. One evening, at the inn of Glenluce, we had occasion to wait till midnight, that we might be taken up by the mail, which was to carry us on to Stranraer. Between ten and eleven, we felt so much fatigued that we stretched our length upon a sofa, and took an hour's sleep. While we were so occupied, our indefatigable companion strolled into the kitchen, where a miscellaneous group of travellers and villagers was assembled around a blazing fire; in particular, there was one person present, a poor wayworn being, who, in his youth, had been a cork-cutter. To him M'Diarmid forthwith attached himself in the way described, and the result was, that, after we were seated in the mail, on the way to Stranraer, he boasted of having, while we were enjoying our inglorious sleep, made himself master of "*the whole statistics of cork-cutting!*"'

In the summer of 1848, Robert went eagerly off on a visit to Rhineland and Switzerland, with a view to satisfy himself on the subject of glacial action, the theories regarding which, of Agassiz and Forbes, had lately raised much interest among geologists. As

Norway was known to offer some striking examples of the effects produced by glaciers, he resolved to proceed thither. Quitting Edinburgh in the latter part of June 1849, he arrived at Göttenburg, from which he made a journey through Sweden and Norway—sometimes going by steam-vessels, sometimes by carrioles, and at other times by boats on the fiords that indent the coast; but always making explorations on foot wherever it was expedient to do so. The result of the excursion was given in a series of papers in *Chambers's Journal* at the close of 1849 and beginning of 1850, under the title of *Tracings of the North of Europe.* Besides any scientific value attaching to these papers, they offered amusing sketches of the social condition of the country as far as Hammerfest, or nearly to the seventy-first degree of north latitude.

Speaking of the climate at Trondhiem, which is placed somewhere in the sixty-third parallel, and therefore about the same latitude with the south of Iceland, he says: 'An Englishman naturally expects to find it a place of cold and harsh appearance, possibly occupied by people wearing skin-dresses, with the wool innermost; whereas, everything looks pretty and in good order, the ladies and gentlemen as well dressed as those of any town of its size in England. As regards climate, I can testify that, on the 17th July, it was barely possible to walk the streets during the day on account of the intense heat.' In proceeding from this place to Hammerfest by steamer, he landed on the occasion of a young gentleman, a native, reaching home, and here he was struck with the kindly manners of the people. 'The simplicity, united with education and good manners, recalled the pleasant pictures which Johnson

and Boswell give of the life and state of the Hebridean gentry—the Macleans and Macleods of seventy years ago; pictures which, I may remark, are rapidly attaining a historical value. Unaffected kindness beamed in the faces of all towards the strangers, and when we came away, they accompanied us to our boats.'

These accounts of the Norwegians form the most agreeable part of the narrative. A few passages may be presented descriptive of a scene when boating with some fellow-travellers in the Altenfiord:

SCENE IN NORWAY.

'In the afternoon, after rowing upwards of twenty miles, we began to approach Komagfiord, where we designed to spend the night. The washed, shattered coast here presents remarkable disturbances of the slate strata, with curious interjections, veinings, and contortions. Many blocks appear, lying on the slate, of totally different kinds of rock, and therefore presumably brought from a distance. By-and-by terraces begin to appear, with many of these travelled blocks reposing on them. Such stones speak, and the tale which they tell is as truthful, perhaps more truthful, than most of those narrated in black and white.

'At length, at an early hour of the evening, we turned into a comparatively small, but sheltered and almost land-locked recess, where we first see palings along the green hill-sides, indicating pastoral farming, and then a neat house seated a little way back from the shore, with a number of smaller buildings scattered near it, including one which advances as a wharf into the sea. That pretty red and yellow mansion, so *riant* with its clean dimity window-curtains, and a little garden in front, is the kiopman's house of Komagfiord. It has a small porch in the centre, with a wooden esplanade and a short flight of steps descending on either hand. A good-looking man, in the prime of life, leans over the rail at the wharf to receive us as we land.

We are met by him with a few courteous words in English; we present our letter of recommendation for Mr Buch, the kiopman, who presently appears, a bulkier and older man, of remarkably open genial countenance, reminding me much of Cowper's description, though not exactly true so far as dress is concerned:

> "An honest man, close-buttoned to the chin,
> Broadcloth without, and a warm heart within."

He meets us with welcome, and we are speedily conducted, with our baggage, to the house, a few steps from the shore, where we are at once introduced into a clean parlour, adorned with family portraitures and some of the favourite prints of Sweden and Norway, particularly the never-absent royal family. Mr Buch, however, does not speak any language besides his own. He only looks the welcome he feels. His wife presently appears, a pleasant-looking matron; likewise his daughter and sole child, whom we by-and-by discover to be the wife of the younger man. Two or three little children, too, the offspring of the young couple, make their way into the room to see those extraordinary beings the English strangers. The younger man, Mr Fantrom, knowing a good deal of English, we speedily, through that channel, becomc acquainted with the whole of this amiable family, from whom I was eventually to receive a greater amount of kindness than it almost ever was my lot to experience from strangers. We desired, of course, to be considered as travellers taking advantage in all courtesy of the obligation under which the kiopman lies to receive such persons into his house; but it will be found that we could not induce our kind hosts to regard us in that light. The family seemed to be in very comfortable circumstances, and the union in which the three generations lived together was beautiful to contemplate. I shall not soon, I trust, forget the kiopman's house of Kamagfiord.

'After the refreshment of tea—for we had taken a good luncheon at sea—we went out to examine the neighbouring

grounds, and soon ascertained that a terrace of detrital matter and blocks goes entirely round the little valley, at the height of about sixty-four feet above the sea. Walking along it round the angle which divides the fiord from the open sea in Varg Sund, we find it become a terrace of erosion on the rough coast there, with huge blocks everywhere encumbering its surface—blocks of foreign rock. Mr Fantrom obligingly went along with us over this ground, and seemed glad when I could employ him in holding the levelling staff for a few minutes. We soon found him a very sensible well-informed man, though geology and geodesy were new ideas to his mind.

'The latter part of the evening proved extremely beautiful, and we were tempted to take seats on the esplanade in front of the door, to enjoy the cool but still balmy air, a delightful refreshment after the heat of the day. The little fiord lay like glass below our feet, with a merchant sloop moored in the entrance; the rugged mountains beyond the Sound rose clear into the bright blue sky, where the light was yet scarcely dulled. Mr Buch sat down with his long pipe, emitting alternate puffs of smoke, and sentences addressed to his son-in-law and grandchildren. The bustle of Mrs Buch engaged in her household duties made the smallest possible stir within. All besides was as calm as nature before the birth of sound. Having nothing better to do, I proposed at this juncture to bring out my flute, and play a few airs, provided it should be agreeable to all present.

'This being cordially assented to, I proceeded to introduce the music of my native country to these simple-hearted Norwegians. The scenery and time seemed to give magic to what might otherwise perhaps have proved of very little interest; and finding my audience give unequivocal tokens of being pleased with my performance, I was induced to go on from one tune to another for fully an hour. It was curious to think of my audience hearing for the first time strains which are an inheritance of the heart to every Scottishman from his earliest sense—to myself, for instance,

since three years old—and to reflect on some of our national favourites, as the *Flowers of the Forest*, *Loch Erroch Side*, and the *Shepherd's Wife*, now floating over the unwonted ground of a Norwegian fiord. With each air, in general, the idea of some home friend, with whom it is a favourite, was associated. There was scarcely one which did not take my mind back to some scene endeared by domestic affection, or the love which, in common with every Scot, I cherish for the classic haunts of my native land. It was deeply interesting now to summon up all these associations in succession, in the presence of an alien family who could know nothing of them, and to whom it would have been in vain to explain them, but who, from that very incapability of sympathy, made them in the existing circumstances fall only the more touchingly and penetratingly into my own spirit.'

On returning from his northern excursion, my brother set to work on a subject for which he had long been accumulating materials—the Life and Works of Robert Burns. As the brilliant and painful history of Burns had been already written by seven of his countrymen, it might seem unnecessary to resume its consideration. Something, however, was wanting. There still survived persons who were acquainted with the poet, but they were passing away, and now was the time for gathering from them such facts and reminiscences as might serve for a full and authentic biography. Among others whose memory might be reckoned on, was Burns's youngest sister, Mrs Begg; and she, on being communicated with, entered cordially into the project. George Thomson was also at hand, and glad to be of any service. As regards the works of the poet, a peculiar arrangement was contemplated. This consisted in presenting the various compositions in

strict chronological order, in connection with the narrative, so that they might render up the whole light they were qualified to throw upon the history of the life and mental progress of Burns; at the same time that a new significance was given to them by their being read in connection with the current of events and emotions which led to their production. Acting on this plan, and after minute personal investigations, the *Life and Works of Robert Burns* was produced in 1851. It was well received, and passed through several editions, to suit different classes of purchasers.

Some years previously, in a great degree through the energetic efforts of my brother, a small pension on the roll of Her Majesty's Charities and Bounties for Scotland had been granted to Mrs Begg and her two daughters; the government in this respect making up, as it were, for neglect on the score of Burns. To add to the pension, he set on foot the collection of a fund, which was moderately successful. In writing from Edinburgh, May 4, 1842, to his wife at St Andrews, he says: 'On Monday, the first-fruits of my application for Burns's sister appeared in two tributes, one of ten pounds from Mr Tegg, bookseller; the other, ten guineas from Mr Procter, the poet. Isn't that capital?' To increase these resources, the profits of a cheap edition of the *Life and Works of Burns* were set aside. The sum realised was not great, but it helped. Writing under date May 15, 1856, to a young American friend who had lately been in Scotland, he says: 'I am glad you saw old Mrs Begg, but it was a pity to miss the black eyes and intelligent face of her daughter, Isabella, who is a charming creature of her kind and sort, and more a reminiscence of Burns than even her mother. Just

about a fortnight ago, W. & R. C. had the pleasure of handing two hundred pounds to the Misses Begg, being the profits of the cheap edition of the *Life and Works of Burns* edited by me, as promised by us at the time of publication. This sum will lie at interest accumulating till Mrs Begg and her annuity cease, when, with one hundred and sixty pounds of the fund formerly collected for Mrs B., it will be sunk in distinct annuities for the daughters. The result, with their several pensions of ten pounds, will place them above all risk of anything like want. They well deserve all that has been done for them by their self-devotion to their mother in less bright days. I have great pleasure in thinking of that happy family on the banks of Doon, and reflecting on the little services I have been able to render them.'

Except in this private way, my brother, who modestly shrunk from all parade, never spoke of what he had helped to do for the poor and, in all respects, deserving relations of Burns. His exertions and liberal gift remained almost unnoted until unexpectedly referred to in the *Household Words* of Mr Dickens; the article on the occasion being a notice of the Burns' Centenary Commemoration at Edinburgh, in 1859. The following paragraph from the article appeared in *The Times*, on the 10th February of that year:

ROBERT BURNS AND ROBERT CHAMBERS.—The claim of our Edinburgh friends to be called out for favourable distinction, arises, in our estimation, from the circumstance that one man happened to be present who has done something for the memory of Burns besides talk about it. Among the list of toasts and speeches we find just two lines reporting that the company drank 'The Biographers of

Burns,' and that Mr Robert Chambers acknowledged the toast. What Mr Robert Chambers said for Burns on this occasion is not mentioned in the report we read. The infinitely more important question of what he has done for Burns, we are in a position to answer without referring to reports. About seventeen years ago a grateful country had left Burns' sister, Mrs Begg, and her daughters in most impoverished circumstances, and Mr Robert Chambers set on foot a subscription for them. The result of the appeal thus made, and of a solemn Branch Burns' Commemoration, got up in Ayrshire, was a subscription amounting to something less than £400, of which the queen and court gave £64. As much was done with this pittance as could be done; and it was sunk in an annuity for the three poor souls to live upon. Mrs Begg and her daughters were settled in a cottage in Ayrshire. Mr Robert Chambers then went bravely to work with his own hands and brains to help Burns' kindred for Burns' sake. After devoting admirable industry and research to the task, he produced *The Life and Poems of Burns*, in four volumes; published the work in 1851, and devoted the first proceeds of the sale, £200, to the necessities of Mrs Begg and her daughters—thus giving from his own individual exertion more than half as much as the entire sum which all Scotland had given.—Dickens' *Household Words.*

Immediately on the publication of the above, a note was written to my brother by Leigh Hunt. It came into my hands only lately, and is too characteristic to be omitted: it was as follows:

'HAMMERSMITH, *Feb. 11th.*

'DEAR ROBERT CHAMBERS—You must take this, please, as a postscript to my last; so that you need not put yourself to the trouble of a reply; but I could not help adding it, to tell you how delighted I was at seeing last night in *The Times* the passage extracted from *Household Words*, respecting your *Life and Works of Burns*, and what you did

with it for the poet's family. These are things which bring tears of admiration into one's eyes. I never heard of the circumstance before, or I should have spoken of it. It did not surprise me, for I already believed you to be a man capable of such things; but it is affecting to see realised what one believes in. I often wish that half-a-dozen people whom I could choose, lived near one another, and could thus make each life half-a-dozen times what it is. I venture to say (for I suppose myself admitted to their society) that I should never give them a moment's pain, except for some grief common to all mortals, or for the approach of my own death; and I feel sure they would give no other to myself. I shall see the whole article to-night in *Household Words*, which always come to me by the last Friday post; but I could not wait. Your affectionate friend,

LEIGH HUNT.'

In June 1855, he had an excellent opportunity of visiting the Faröe Islands and Iceland, and this, for geological reasons, he did not neglect. The *Thor*, a Danish screw war-steamer, touched at Leith on its way to Iceland, and at a certain charge six gentlemen were accommodated as passengers. It was a pleasant trip. Reikiavik, the capital of Iceland, was reached in safety; and in a day or two began a journey, in a rude fashion, on the backs of ponies, to the famed Geysers, a distance of seventy miles across a wild country, with no proper places for rest or lodging. Yet, as he describes the excursion, it was, though rough, a novel, hilarious affair after all. At Thingvalla, the only accommodation for the night was to bivouac in the church, and the only means of lingual communication with the clergyman who acted as host was in a corrupt Latin. Robert made his couch in the pulpit. On the second day, the party got to a farm-house in the vicinity of the Geysers;

and next morning, some of these hot-water volcanoes were in ebullition. The chief curiosity is the Great Geyser, a kind of well, nine feet in diameter, and eighty-seven feet deep, from which were seen thrown up violent jets of water to a height of from seventy to a hundred feet. The heat of the water is extraordinary. 'It has been found that the water of the Great Geyser at the bottom of the tube has a temperature higher than that of ordinary boiling water, and this goes on increasing till an eruption takes place, immediately before which it has been found as high as 261° Fahrenheit,' or 49° above ordinary boiling-point—a circumstance inferring enormous compression under violent heat, until the water bursts out into the atmosphere.

Returning by the way they had come, the excursionists were again glad to take up their quarters in the establishment of the parish minister, who, it appeared, on a cross-examination in Latin by my brother, supported a wife and eight children, performed his parochial duties, and travelled once a month to a preaching station eighteen miles distant—all for five-and-twenty pounds a year. 'We could not but wonder how so large a family, besides a horse, could be supported on means so small. In wandering about the place, I lighted upon his little stithy, which reminds me to tell that in Iceland a priest is always able to shoe your horse if required.' The little book in which these particulars were given, entitled *Tracings in Iceland and the Faröe Islands*, was published in 1856.

A number of years had elapsed since he wrote a *History of Scotland* for a series of books issued by Richard Bentley. The subject was so familiar that he now applied himself with zest to a work entitled

the *Domestic Annals of Scotland.* It was comprised in three volumes. Two of these were issued in 1859, and a third appeared in 1861. The period over which the annals extended was from the Reformation to the Rebellion of 1745, nearly two hundred of the most interesting years in Scottish history. The work, however, was not a history in the usual sense of the word. It consisted of a chronicle of occurrences of a familiar, sometimes amusing, nature beneath the region of history, but calculated to convey a correct notion of the manners, customs, passions, superstitions, and ignorance of the people—the pestilences, famines, and other extraordinary events which disturbed their tranquillity—the traits of false political economy by which their well-being was checked—and generally those things which enable us to see how our forefathers thought, felt, and suffered, and how, on the whole, ordinary life looked in their days. The materials for this assemblage of facts were searched for in public records, acts of parliament, criminal trials, private diaries, family papers, histories, biographies, journals of transactions, &c.—the whole amounting to nearly a hundred different authorities, while the passages selected were so strung together chronologically as to offer a progressive picture of the times. On this work, so laborious, yet coincident with his feelings, he occupied himself at times during five years without in any respect remitting his writings for *Chambers's Journal.*

Between 1853 and 1858, Robert had occasion to be frequently in London, partly from business and literary considerations, and partly to enjoy the converse of scientific friends. On the 10th February 1857, in writing to his daughter Anne, he alluded to a club dinner he had

been at, and the letter is so characteristic, that we present the following extract:

'Yesterday, I went as the guest of Lord Ducie to the Geographical Society Club dinner, in the *Thatched House Tavern*, St James' Street. Sir Roderick I. Murchison was in the chair, with Count Chreptovitsch, the Russian ambassador, at his right hand; next to him Lord Ducie, then myself; Sir Henry Rawlinson at my other side. This was very agreeable society. The ambassador is a pleasant-looking man of sixty-five, with white hair rather close clipped. His health was drunk very cordially, and he returned thanks in one brief sentence. Afterwards, Sir Roderick rose up and repeated as a communication from His Excellency, that the Russian government is quite with England in the Persian War. Sir George Pollock was my *vis-à-vis*, who conducted the army back from Afghanistan in 1843—a quiet old man, the son of a saddler from Berwick, and brother of the Chief Baron, with whom I dined last week.

'Having a momentary opportunity of conversing with the Russian ambassador, I told him of a large Russian vessel being thrown on the east coast of Aberdeenshire, in the time of the Regency of Mary of Guise (1542–60), when all the crew were saved, along with some persons of distinction, who were brought to the court at Edinburgh, and hospitably entertained there; after which they were conducted honourably to Berwick, and there passed into the dominions of the English sovereign, Mary. Seeing that he appeared to be interested in the story, I told him I should have much pleasure in sending him the particulars of the affair, remarking it was one of a much more pleasant nature for both countries than some that had taken place since; in which he

cordially agreed, and gave me his card that I might address the communication properly.'

My brother became a member of the Merchant Company of Edinburgh, a guild or corporation of old date, existing mainly for beneficiary purposes, and which, by good management, has attained to wealth and importance; being deservedly esteemed for its acts of public usefulness. As a member of this body, he in time was elected to fill the office of Master, such being the designation given to the president. While occupying this honorary position, he delivered a lecture at an evening conversazione, 14th February 1859, on the subject of 'Edinburgh Merchants and Merchandise in Old Times,' which gratified a very numerous audience, and was afterwards printed for general circulation. Into this lecture he threw a great variety of amusing facts collected in the course of his studies. The matter more particularly curious in the discourse consisted of statements regarding families of distinction throughout the country, which had sprung from persons who had carried on business, many of them in a humble style, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The object of these illustrations was to shew how, by a course of sobriety and diligence in his calling, a man may rise to fortune, not only for his own advantage, but that of his descendants; and to remind many who occupy a high social position what they owe to the thrift and plodding industry of their ancestors. The lecture was in my brother's best anecdotic style. He spoke of a Hamilton of the house of Innerwick who was a trafficker in the West Bow, who acquired land, and fell as a gallant gentleman at the battle of Pinkie, leaving a son, who was ancestor of the Earls of

Haddington,—Of Edward Hope, a shopkeeper in the Luckenbooths, who lived in Tod's Close in the Castlehill, whose eldest son was the progenitor of all the Hopes who have stood conspicuous in rank, in wealth, and in public service in Scotland; while from his younger son are descended the famous mercantile firm of the Hopes of Amsterdam,—Of Thomas Foulis, a goldsmith in the Parliament Close, who lent money to James VI., and had for requital a grant of the lead mines of Lanarkshire, which he worked with good result, and handed ultimately to his grand-daughter, who married James Hope, the ancestor of the Earls of Hopetoun,—Of John Trotter, who acquired by merchandise the means of purchasing the estate of Morton Hall, and thus laid the foundation of a family which still exists in great note and opulence. Another instance was that of James Riddell of that Ilk. This gentleman, after pursuing a business career for some time in Poland, where many Scotch youths then found occupation, returned to Edinburgh about the year 1603, set up business there, married a lady of means styled Bessie Allan, and died a wealthy man. His son, who became a merchant in Leith, purchased the estate of Kinglass, which he left to a line of descendants. We cannot but view with interest the good sense of our gentry of two and three hundred years ago, in setting their younger sons to a career of useful and honourable industry, instead of allowing them idly to loiter at home, or go into the little better than idleness of a foreign military service. After citing numerous instances, he mentioned that a notable case was that of John Dalrymple, a cloth-merchant, younger brother of Lord Hailes, and great-grandson of the first Earl of Stair; and then added:

'That so many landed families amongst us have descended from Edinburgh merchants, is no singular fact, for trade efflorescing into nobility is an old phenomenon in the south. There we have a Duke of Leeds descended from the apprentice of Sir William Hewit, the goldsmith; the Wentworth Fitzwilliams, from a worthy London merchant, knighted by Henry VIII. From the nautical adventurer Phipps, of the time of Charles II., come the Earls of Mulgrave. Cornwallis is from a London merchant; Coventry from a mercer; Radnor from a silk manufacturer; Warwick from a wool-stapler; Pomfret from a Calais merchant; Essex, Dartmouth, Craven, Tankerville, Darnley, Cowper, and Romney, have all had a similar origin. More recently ennobled families — the Dacres, the Dormers, the Dudley Wards, the Hills, the Caringtons—have all in like manner taken their rise from successful trade. It is an origin surely as honourable as dexterous courtiership, gifts of church lands, or medieval robbery and plunder.'

Contrasting old with new times, he concludes by observing that 'our predecessors had not merely to contend with the narrow resources of the country, and with the want of a thousand conveniences as regards transport of goods and conveyance of intelligence, but, worst of all, they had to struggle with their own ignorance, as well as with a host of erroneous principles of legislation, of which we are now happily rid.'

Shortly after this, he edited and wrote an introductory notice to a volume purporting to be the *Memoirs of a Banking-house*, by Sir William Forbes of Pitsligo, Bart., author of the life of the poet Beattie. The banking-house so signalised was that which was set on foot

in Edinburgh by John Coutts & Co., who occupied as business premises an upper floor in the Parliament Close. The Coutts family were from Montrose, and began as corn-merchants and negotiators of bills of exchange. One of them, John Coutts, was Lord Provost of Edinburgh in 1742. He had four sons—Patrick, John, James, and Thomas. By these the business was continued, and received as apprentice the youthful Sir William Forbes, in 1754. In the whole round of biography, there is nothing finer by way of example to the young than the life of Sir William Forbes. Born in 1739, heir to a baronetcy, and left fatherless at four years of age, without patrimony, he was, commercially speaking, a self-made man, though, like many youths in similar circumstances, he owed much to the care of an amiable and intelligent mother, who, dwelling in a small house in one of the dingy lanes of Edinburgh, maintained on the most slender means the style and manners of a lady. Her son, Sir William, a boy fourteen years of age, instead of being bred to one of the 'learned professions,' was put apprentice to Messrs Coutts; from an apprentice, he became a junior clerk; from a clerk, he rose to be a partner; and finally, when several of the partners died or quitted Edinburgh, the firm was transformed into that of Sir William Forbes & Co., of which he was the leading member. The firm, as is well known, is now merged in the Union Bank of Scotland.

Sir William, as we learn from the memoir, was reared, and acquired strict habits of business, chiefly under the eye of John Coutts; for Thomas, his brother, the youngest son of the Lord Provost, removed to London. There, founding the banking concern of Coutts & Co., he died in 1822, at about ninety years of age; his

youngest daughter Sophia, married to Sir Francis Burdett, being mother of the much-esteemed Baroness Burdett Coutts. The memoir, which contains many curious particulars about banking in the olden time, was written by Sir William Forbes with a view to impress his son and successor with the paramount importance of exercising, with diligence in his profession, the highest principles of integrity, for only by such could he expect to sustain the enviable reputation of the house. The universal mourning on the death of Sir William Forbes, in 1806, shortly after he had completed his *Life of Beattie*, caused Sir Walter Scott to refer to him in one of the cantos of *Marmion*, when addressing the amiable banker's son-in-law, and the poet's friend, Mr Skene of Rubislaw:

> 'Scarce had the lamented Forbes paid
> The tribute to his minstrel's shade,
> The tale of friendship scarce was told,
> Ere the narrator's heart was cold.
> Far may we search before we find
> A heart so manly and so kind.'

In editing the autobiography of this distinguished banker, my brother enjoyed a pleasure instead of performing a task. The same might be said of a series of detached papers, written at spare intervals, or to deliver as lectures. The subjects of these tracts, ultimately issued in 1861 under the title of *Edinburgh Papers*, were various—old domestic architecture, merchants and merchandise in old times, the posture of the scientific world, some notions on geology, and the romantic Scottish ballads. By this last-named paper, the accepted opinions regarding several popular ballads, as given by Percy and Scott, were considerably ruffled. In it he

ventured to shew that, so far from being ancient, these ballads had been written, in an affectedly old style, not earlier than the beginning of the eighteenth century—the surreptitious manufacture being executed by a woman clever at versification, Lady Wardlaw of Pitreavie. Professor Aytoun, amongst others, was, of course, not well pleased at this unhappy overturn of certain literary traditions, but could not disprove the accuracy of the view that had been adopted. There was at the time considerable discussion on the subject.

My brother and I had talked of visiting the United States and Canada. We had pretty extensive business relations in these countries; but what chiefly interested us was the social aspect of affairs beyond the Atlantic. I was able to make this desired trip in 1853, the account of which appeared as *Things as They are in America* (1854). Robert's excursion was postponed for a few years longer.

When the old Theatre Royal in Edinburgh was about to be taken down in 1859, in order to make way for the new General Post-office, he, at the request of some amateurs of the drama, wrote a historical sketch of the old building, with its successive managers, and the great theatrical stars who had made their appearance on its stage. The pamphlet was a trifle, but not devoid of some amusing particulars; for example, the account given of the visit of Mrs Siddons, in May 1784, when she performed twelve nights, extending over a period of three weeks, and during which she played her principal characters, including Mrs Beverley, Jane Shore, Isabella, Lady Randolph, and Euphrasia in the *Grecian Daughter:*

MRS SIDDONS.

'The furor created in the town by the performances of this illustrious lady was extraordinary. Prodigious crowds attended hours before the performance for the chance of a place. It came to be necessary to admit them at three, and then people began to attend at twelve to get in at three. The General Assembly of the church, in session at the time, found it necessary to arrange their meetings with some reference to the hours at the theatre, for the younger members had discovered that attendance on Mrs Siddons's performances was calculated to be of some advantage to them, as a means of improving their elocution. People came from distant places, even from Newcastle, to witness what all spoke of with wonder. There were one day applications for 2557 places, while there were only 630 of that kind in the house. Porters and servants had to bivouac for a night in the streets, on mats and palliasses, in order that they might get an early chance of admission to the box-office next day. At the more thrilling parts of the performance, the audience were agitated to a degree unprecedented in this cool latitude. Many ladies fainted. This was particularly the case on the evening when *Isabella, or the Fatal Marriage*, was performed. The personator of Isabella has to exhibit the distress of a wife, on finding, after a second marriage, that her first and loved husband, Biron, is still alive. Mrs Siddons herself was left at the close in such an exhausted state, that some minutes elapsed before she could be carried off the stage. A young heiress, Miss Gordon of Gight, in Aberdeenshire, was carried out of her box in hysterics, screaming loudly the words caught from the great actress : "Oh, my Biron ! my Biron !" A strange tale was therewith connected. A gentleman, whom she had not at this time seen or heard of, the Honourable John Biron, next year met, paid his addresses, and married her. It was to her a fatal marriage in several respects, although it gave to the world the poet Lord Byron. Strange to say, a lady

lived till January 1858, the Dowager Lady G——, who was in the house that evening, and who never could forget the ominous sounds of "Oh, my Biron!" The writer of this little memoir has heard the story related by another lady who was also in the house that night, and who died in 1855. By her performances in Edinburgh on this occasion, Mrs Siddons cleared nearly £1000, her benefit alone yielding £350; all this being over and above the profits of a night given to the Charity-Workhouse.'

Robert, accompanied by his wife, effected his long-desired visit to the United States in 1860, everywhere receiving much attention from men of literary and scientific tastes. Unfortunately, his dear old friend and correspondent, Willie Wilson, had died shortly before his arrival in the country. Of his extensive excursion my brother did not give any regular account, but contented himself with writing two or three articles in *Chambers's Journal*.

We now approach the end. On my brother's return from America, there were consultations on the project of a work, likely to be successful, but which could not be executed in Edinburgh. It required the resources of the British Museum. For this purpose it was resolved that he should migrate, with his family, to London, if his stay should be only for a few years. So to London he and his family went, their residence being Verulam House, one of the pleasant villas at St John's Wood. The work which had suggested this wrench in accustomed habits was the *Book of Days*, a miscellany of popular antiquities in connection with the calendar, including anecdotes, biographies, curiosities of literature, and oddities of human life and character.

From the time he began to reside in London, March 1861, he was much occupied with this undertaking, and became a frequent visitor of the British Museum, as well as of the Athenæum, of which club he had the good fortune to be elected a member. Although he possessed an excellent private collection of books, it was nothing in comparison to the very comprehensive library of the Athenæum, which accordingly formed a great attraction, independently of the very choice company to be met with. Verulam House was a residence excelling in amenities any which he and his family had yet occupied. Regarding his life here for the next two years, his daughter Anne, now Mrs Dowie (who most closely resembles him of all his family), has furnished me with the following particulars:

'My dear father wrote to me shortly after taking possession of Verulam, which he described as comprehending "a large garden, lawn, hot-houses, and in short the whole paraphernalia of a gentleman's country-house, with a fine conservatory, adjoining the drawing-room, and containing a fountain surrounded with flowers." Besides plenty of space for the beloved books, and spare rooms for guests, there was no end of scope for the romping of grandchildren. On the lawn, adjoining a rustic summer-house, there were some fine trees, one of them a splendid spreading oak, beneath which my mother often took breakfast, at which she usually held a levée of cats. Her fondness for these animals was extraordinary, and she always maintained that they were a misunderstood and ill-used people. Her more special favourites were two beautiful white cats, known as Mr and Mrs Archie, and one of their kittens

was generally perched on her shoulder, when seated under the trees.

'During the winter of 1861–2, my father spent a large part of his time at the Athenæum, perusing the proof sheets not only of the *Book of Days*, but of the *History of the Indian Mutiny*, which the firm was publishing, and for this latter work he felt it to be strange and interesting to have the advantage of consulting the general who had held the chief command during that terrible Indian convulsion—namely, Lord Clyde, with whom he became acquainted at the club. In 1862, he was somewhat surprised to find himself appointed a judge in one of the sections of the International Exhibition, a circumstance which brought him in contact with the commissioners, and led to some pleasant soirées at the South Kensington Museum. About the same period he, in company with his daughter Janet, attended the meetings and lectures of the Royal Institution, and had much pleasant intercourse with such friends as Dr Carpenter, Dr W. B. Hodgson, Mr Watts of the British Museum, Professors Huxley, Tyndall, and H. D. Rogers, also Sir Charles Nicholson, late of Sydney, a person whose society always afforded him the highest pleasure. With Sir Charles, he made a trip to France and Belgium, chiefly with the view of visiting the quarry near Amiens, noted for its deposit of flint axes.

'In January 1863, he wrote to me, that he had just returned from Scotland, where he had enjoyed a lively fortnight among a circle of old acquaintances. Scarcely was he well settled at Verulam, when he was invited to St Andrews to receive the degree of LL.D. from the university, an honour which came upon him entirely unsolicited. Returning again to London, he endeav-

oured to make up for lost time by excessive labour at the *Book of Days*, which, wherever he was, kept him pretty much on the rack. Accordingly, work, work, work still went on to a degree which it is most painful to recollect. Some assistance, on which he confidently reckoned, having grievously failed, and the press being urgent, there was no escape from the labour which he had undertaken. For a breathing space, he took refuge with me at Moffat in June 1863. Here he enjoyed the bracing air and pastoral scenery, yet not greatly advancing in health. We made little excursions together up the valleys in the neighbourhood. One day, we went as far as the cataract known as the Gray Mare's Tail, pausing for an hour or two at Jenny Broadfoot's, at Braehead, in whose tiny parlour, containing a box-bed, he was much affected, when telling me that he had spent a night here forty years ago, when travelling on foot to collect materials for the *Picture of Scotland*. "Here," said he, "in the midst of these grand old hills, noted in our national annals, and embalmed in immortal verse, I again take my countrymen to my heart, and wonder if I shall be able to live any more as an exile in the south." Necessity, however, drew him back to St John's Wood, where, at length, his herculean literary task came to a conclusion.'

The mental strain which my brother underwent with what his daughter properly calls a 'herculean literary task,' was more than he was able to bear. The work was finished, but the author was finished also. Not that he died on the spot, but his system was shattered, and he could not in future incur any continuous exertion. To aggravate his disorder, he experienced some sad

domestic bereavements. In September 1863, he lost his wife, and almost immediately thereafter Janet, an amiable daughter of great intellect and beauty. Like most other works he produced, the *Book of Days* proved a success. But at what a cost? He was heard to say: 'That book was my death-blow,' and such it really was.

With all its attractions, Verulam House could not retain my brother in London. He longed to be in the midst of scenes connected with old associations. Returning to Scotland in an enfeebled state of health, he took up his residence in St Andrews, a place to which he had twenty years previously become much attached, on account of its agreeable society, its bracing atmosphere, and its extensive links, noted for the game of golf, a healthful outdoor amusement, not demanding too great an amount of physical exertion. There we may leave him for a little space, in the society of his youngest daughter—his windows overlooking the Firth of Tay, and the celebrated Bell-rock Light-house flashing far in the east, like a lustrous gem on the bosom of the German Ocean.

CHAPTER XIII.

A SKELETON IN THE HOUSE, AND OTHER MATTERS.

THERE is a skeleton in every house! All have something or other to trouble them, however well off and at ease they may appear to be. For twenty-one years after the commencement of *Chambers's Journal*, and while all seemed to be going on prosperously, my brother and I were plagued with a skeleton, of whom the world had no means of being cognisant. The nature of the skeleton was this. Operating from Edinburgh as a centre, we had necessarily to entrust a large commission business to a bookseller in London, who had us pretty much at his mercy. Things might be going right or wrong with him, for anything we could satisfactorily discover. At first, there was no cause for uneasiness; but in the progress of events, when a small grew into a great concern, we could not divest ourselves of apprehensions of a catastrophe.

Such was our skeleton! Perhaps we were no worse off than our neighbours, but that is always a poor consolation. We might possibly have rid ourselves of the skeleton. That, however, would perhaps only have amounted to a substitution of a new for an old source of distrust. So we were fain to temporise, and to make

the best of things as they stood. In a social point of view, we were on excellent terms with the personality of our skeleton, and there was not a little pleasant intercourse among us. I was often for weeks in London; and by these visits an acquaintanceship was kept up with various esteemed contributors, among whom we had great pleasure in numbering Mrs S. C. Hall, who wrote for us some admirable stories of Irish life, and through whom we procured a juvenile story from the venerable Maria Edgeworth.

On one of these occasions of visiting the metropolis, a new and unexpected acquaintance was formed. It was in 1844, when residing in Greek Street, Soho. One day about noon, a carriage drives up to the door—not a vehicle of the light modern sort, but an old family coach, drawn by a pair of sleek horses. From it descends an aged gentleman, who, from his shovel hat and black gaiters, is seen to be an ecclesiastical dignitary. I overhear, by the voices at the door, that I am asked for. 'Who, in all the world, can this be?' A few minutes solve the question. Heavy footsteps are heard deliberately ascending the antique balustraded stair. My unknown visitor is ushered in—his name announced: 'The Rev. Sydney Smith.' I hasten to receive so celebrated a personage as is befitting, and express the pleasure I have in the unexpected visit—wondering how he had discovered me.

'I heard at Rogers's you were in town,' said he, 'and was resolved to call. Let us sit down, and have a talk.'

We drew towards the fire, for the day was cold, and he continued: 'You are surprised possibly at my visit. There is nothing at all strange about it. The originator

of the *Edinburgh Review* has come to see the originator of the *Edinburgh Journal*.'

I felt honoured by the remark, and delighted beyond measure with the good-natured and unceremonious observations which my visitor made on a variety of subjects. We talked of Edinburgh, and I asked him where he had lived. He said it was in Buccleuch Place, not far from Jeffrey, with an outlook behind to the Meadows. 'Ah,' he remarked, 'what charming walks I had about Arthur's Seat, with the clear mountain air blowing in one's face! I often think of that glorious scene.' I alluded to the cluster of young men—Jeffrey, Horner, Brougham, himself, and one or two others, who had been concerned in commencing the *Review* in 1802. Of these, he spoke with most affection of Horner, and specified one who, from his vanity and eccentricities, could not be trusted. Great secrecy, he said, had to be employed in conducting the undertaking, and this agrees with what Lord Jeffrey told my brother. My reverend and facetious visitor made some little inquiry about my own early efforts, and he laughed when I reminded him of a saying of his own about studying on a little oat-meal—for that would have applied literally to my brother and to myself. 'Ah, *labora, labora*,' he said sententiously, 'how that word expresses the character of your country!'

'Well, we do sometimes work pretty hard,' I observed; 'but for all that, we can relish a pleasantry as much as our neighbours. You must have seen that the Scotch have a considerable fund of humour.'

'Oh, by all means,' replied my visitor, 'you are an immensely funny people, but you need a little operating upon to let the fun out. I know no instrument so

effectual for the purpose as the cork-screw!' Mutual laughter, of course.

There was some more chat of this kind, and we parted. This interview led to a few days of agreeable intercourse with Sydney Smith. By invitation, I went next morning to his house in Green Street, Grosvenor Square, to breakfast; and the day following, went with him to breakfast with a select party, at the mansion of Samuel Rogers, St James's, when there ensued a stream of witticisms and repartees for pretty nearly a couple of hours. This was assuredly the most pleasant conversational treat I ever experienced. On quitting London, I bade good-bye to Sydney Smith with extreme regret. We never met again. He died in February the following year.

Years pass on; in each, excursions being made with some literary object in view. While residing in London in 1847, I was honoured with the acquaintance of Miss Mitford, whom I visited by invitation at her neat little cottage, Three-mile Cross, near Reading; the pleasantest thing about the visit being a walk with the aged lady among the green lanes in the neighbourhood—she trotting along with a tall cane, and speaking of rural scenes and circumstances. I see by the lately published life of Boner, that in a letter to him, under date December 16, 1847, she refers to this visit, stating that she was at the time engaged along with Mr Lovejoy, a bookseller in Reading, in a plan for establishing lending libraries for the poor, in which, she says, I assisted her with information and advice. What I really advised was that, following out a scheme adopted in East Lothian, parishes should join in establishing itinerating libraries, each composed of different books, so that,

being shifted from place to place, a degree of novelty might be maintained for mutual advantage.

In 1848, I visited Germany, mainly to look into educational and penal arrangements; and at Berlin, through the polite attention of Professor Zumpt, had the satisfaction of becoming acquainted with the Prussian compulsory system of education, which, in its later developments, has had so startling an effect on the affairs of continental Europe.

I had visited France several times: To see the extinct volcanoes of Auvergne, and the Roman remains of Provence—to see the prison discipline at Roquette and Fontrevault, and the juvenile reformatory at Mettray—to see Voisin's method of rousing the dormant intellect of imbecile children at the Bicêtre, and so on. I again visited the country in 1849; on this occasion remaining longer than usual in Paris, and seeing more of the social life of the people. For this, let me acknowledge myself indebted to the Dowager Countess of Elgin (a Scottish lady of the Oswalds of Dunnikier), who found me out in the Boulevard des Italiens, and introduced me along with my wife to an agreeable literary circle, including M. Lamartine, M. Mohl, and Léon Faucher. Lamartine—tall, thin, and unimpassioned—the centre of a group of admirers, listened with cold complacency when I told him that a translation of his *Voyage en Orient* had been eminently popular in England. Faucher was greatly more conversible. He was interested in hearing about our system of poor-laws, municipal government, and other topics connected with social economy, on which I did my best to give him some information.

On one of these evenings, I was introduced to a

young Frenchman, son of a noted revolutionist during the Reign of Terror, who had afterwards saved his life by hiding himself, and changing his name, until he could again appear publicly. He had recently died, and his whole effects were about to be sold, in order that the produce might be equally divided among his family. The articles were said to be curious; and such I found to be the case, on going by invitation to see them in an old dignified mansion, near the Temple—the most curious thing of all being the identical proclamation which Robespierre had begun to write at the Hôtel de Ville, when his assailants burst in upon him, and he was shot through the jaw. He had got only the length of scrawling the words, '*Courage, mes compatriotes*,' when, being struck, the pen fell from his hand, and big drops of blood were scattered over the paper. Bearing these marks of discoloration, how strange a memorial of the horrors of 1794!

I was much delighted with the simplicity and inexpensiveness of the evening parties at the house of the countess, which was situated in the neighbourhood of the Rue de Bac, and had been a palace of some pretension in the days of the old monarchy. People came to see and converse with each other—not ceremoniously to eat and drink, and go away in a state of discomfort. The few weeks I spent in Paris on this occasion were among the most delightful in my whole existence.

While residing at Glenormiston, in Peeblesshire, in the summer of 1850, I was favoured with a visit from the aged Sir Adam Ferguson, the early friend of Sir Walter Scott, and who is often referred to by Lockhart. Sir Adam was a son of Professor Ferguson, author of

the *History of the Roman Republic*, who had lived at Hallyards, in the parish of Manor, Peeblesshire, at the end of the last and beginning of the present century. From his acquaintance with the Fergusons, Scott, when travelling to Carlisle in 1797, paid a passing visit to Hallyards, when he and young Adam had an interview with David Ritchie, whose misshapen figure and misan thropic character suggested the fictitious Black Dwarf.

After these days of youth and hope, Adam Ferguson had an active and hazardous career. He entered the army, in which he rose to the rank of captain. In the war in the Peninsula, he suffered a severe wound in the knee, by a musket-bullet, and was taken prisoner. To relieve the tedium of his captivity, he petitioned Fouché to be permitted to visit Paris, and this unusual favour was granted in consideration of his father's fame, but still more for that of his uncle, the illustrious Black, whose discoveries in chemistry were highly appreciated in France. While in Paris, Captain Ferguson had the satisfaction of seeing Bonaparte. At the peace, he returned to Scotland, and renewed his intimacy with Scott. This friendship was warm and confidential, for in his old acquaintance, the 'Great Unknown' reposed the secret of his authorship of *Waverley;* and, indeed, Captain Ferguson spent much of his time at Abbotsford, and sat for hours with Sir Walter, while he was penning his deathless fictions. A few years previous to his visit to me in the country, he had received the honour of knighthood.

Sir Adam was an intimate acquaintance of my brother, at whose house I frequently met him. Notwithstanding his extreme age, he possessed great buoyancy of spirit, told amusing anecdotes, and was an enthusiastic admirer

of the Scottish melodies. On one occasion, when sitting in a state of entrancement listening to some music played by Mrs R. Chambers, one of her daughters (Mary) made a clever sketch of him in crayons. He had long entertained a wish to visit Peeblesshire for the last time, and now, in his eighty-first year, the wish was realised. Accompanied by my brother and a gentleman of the neighbourhood, I drove him to Hallyards to see his former haunts. Every step in the excursion awakened old and slumbering recollections. He declared, however, that he with difficulty recognised some of the ancient landmarks. The sight of the old avenue at Hallyards affected him considerably. He said he was afraid his feelings would not allow him to enter the house; but the spirit of the old soldier rallied, and with all his wonted humour, he related various incidents illustrative of past events. He essayed to mount to a room which he had occupied when a youth, but the narrowness of the staircase, and the infirmity of the unfortunate knee, presented insuperable obstacles to the ascent. On leaving the grounds, we drove to the Black Dwarf's cottage, the scene of the interview with Scott. A shock awaited the veteran. By an unfortunate exercise of bad taste, the lowly thatched structure had been transformed into a slated house—a circumstance for which we all heartily expressed our regret. Next day I parted with Sir Adam. Afterwards, I saw him several times in Edinburgh. He died at the close of 1854.

How my brother and I, as fancy directed, should have had leisure to spend months in rambling up and down the world, is worth a little explanation. In one of Robert's essays, he moralises on the advantage of blending with professional pursuits that amount of

leisure which will enable us to cultivate the higher class of feelings; for, by neglect on this score, life in the long-run will only be looked back upon as a disappointing dream. On principles of this kind, we endeavoured to act, but could have obtained no success in the attempt, by following the too common practice of hurrying into one project after another, irrespective of consequences. At the outset, we laid down three rules, which were inflexibly maintained: Never to take credit, but pay for all the great elements of trade in ready money; never to give a bill, and never discount one; and never to undertake any enterprise for which means were not prepared. Obviously, by no other plan of operations could we have been freed from anxiety, and at liberty to make use of the leisure at our disposal.

No anxiety?—yes, there was some. We had still the skeleton, which had so grown and grown in dimensions as to be at length truly formidable. About 1852, matters became critical. It was as clear as could be, that we were to incur a heavy loss. In nothing in his whole life did my brother manifest more vigour of character than in determining to get rid, at all hazards, of this source of disquietude. He thought of Scott and the Ballantynes, and how, by an extreme and misplaced confidence, arising from kindness of heart, a man may be irretrievably ruined. Without further periphrasis: taking all risks, we withdrew our agency in 1853, and established a branch business in London under charge of our youngest brother, David, on whose fidelity we thought we might rely.

Now comes a startling and melancholy fact, from which it would not be difficult to draw a moral. The concern that had for twenty-one years possessed our

agency, had reaped a profit from it of not less than forty thousand pounds—a sum equal to about eight times what Gibbon received for his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, and eighty times what poor Robert Burns ever received for all his world-famed writings! All was gone, and a vast deal more—vanished into empty space. A fortune such as few are born to had been absolutely thrown away.

The whole of this affair, with some collateral circumstances, reviewed over a course of years, furnished an interesting and not uninstructive commercial study. In London, as any one may observe, there are two prevailing methods of ruination: Extravagance in living, and trading beyond means — substituting sanguine expectations, along with borrowed money, for capital. Such, no doubt, are errors everywhere, but in the metropolis they revel without restraint, almost without rebuke. And from the glimpses obtained, I regret to say, they are not unknown in certain sections of the publishing profession. In whatever department of trade, so frightful is the hurry, that means are not suffered to accumulate in order to allow of ready-money payments. The whole transactions subside into a system of bills —bills to wholesale stationers, bills to printers, bills to artists, bills to writers, bills to everybody. In the same wild way, bills that are received are hurried off for discount. There is great seeming prosperity, but so is there too frequently a great bill-book—dismal record of difficulties and heart-aches. The chief difficulty is how to effect discounts. Hours are perhaps spent daily in the effort. Commercially, there is a struggle between life and death every four-and-twenty hours. Who would covet existence on such terms?

The banks, somehow, fail to monopolise the discount trade. They are rivalled by private capitalists, who, in ordinary slang, are known as 'parties.' There is always a 'party'—some mysterious being who lives at Bath, or Boulogne, or somewhere—to whom, through a 'party' more immediately visible, succour is looked for in emergencies. The 'party' dealt with is sometimes a mighty pleasant and presentable person—jolly, good-natured countenance; punctilious in dress; abounding in anecdotes about the drama and the 'Derby;' well read; and avowing a high opinion of Campbell as a poet, can give with proper effect quotations from the *Pleasures of Hope*. Meeting him at a ceremonious family dinner, you would never, from his appearance and high-souled chivalric ideas, take him for a 'party,' but half the guests know that he possesses that imposing character in relation to the unfortunate host, whom he could any day crumple up at pleasure, and only bides his time to do so. When Junius made the famous remark, that 'party is the madness of many for the gain of a few,' he spoke the truth in more ways than one.

Usually, in one way or other, the money-lending 'party' becomes the final beneficiary. Should the advances be made to some unhappy publishing concern, copyrights are assigned in security, and seldom do they return to their original owner. Valuable literary property, the fruit of ingenious conception and enterprise, is thus constantly undergoing a process of transfer and confiscation. We may feel shocked with the tyranny of capital, but the blame is due to the extravagant credit system, along with an insane overhaste to be rich; along, also—for we must not forget that—with an insane extravagance in living, which yields comfort to

neither body nor mind; this, however, is a circumstance so very commonplace as to engage little or no attention.

It will be remembered how James King, our early friend and fellow-labourer in scientific experiments, had emigrated to Australia, in order to follow out an industrial career. From one thing to another, he became proprietor of vineyards at Irawang, New South Wales, and there devoted himself to the perfection of the wine-manufacture in the colony. In this pursuit, he was, by his chemical knowledge, perseverance, and enterprise, eminently successful; but what avails professional eminence with loss of health? Returning to England, he travelled over the continent, and established a friendship with Baron Liebig, who furnished suggestions for improving the quality of his wines. Hints of this kind he did not live to profit by. I found him in London, a wreck—sad contrast to what he had been when departing, as a high-spirited youth, to push his fortune abroad. A renewal of intercourse was scarcely practicable, for he heard and spoke only with difficulty. He died in London in 1857, leaving a widow and son to conduct his affairs in the colony.

Amidst literary and other avocations, my brother and I never forgot Peebles. We visited the place—notably so in 1841, to be complimented with the 'Freedom of the Burgh;' and tried to keep up an acquaintance with old friends, ever diminishing in number till scarcely one of them was left. After residing several summers in the neighbourhood, being forcibly reminded of the benefits which my brother and I had derived from Elder's library—long since extinct—I gifted to the town a suite of buildings consisting of a library of ten thousand volumes, reading-room, museum, gallery of art, and lecture-hall, with the view

of promoting the mental improvement of the humbler classes; but whether the institution so organised will have any such effect, seems, after an experience of twelve years, exceedingly doubtful. So slight has been the success, that others may well pause before venturing on a similar experiment.

An incident in strange contrast to some events recorded in the early part of these reminiscences, and which occurred very unexpectedly without any wish on my part, was my election to the office of Lord Provost of Edinburgh in 1865. Through a second election in 1868, I occupied the office altogether for four years; it was voluntarily resigned by me in 1869. Regarding this period of public service, which formed an interesting episode in a usually quiet life, the circumstance on which I have most reason to reflect with satisfaction, is that of having projected and obtained an act of parliament for effecting a much wanted sanitary and general improvement of the older part of the city. Another incident, never for a moment anticipated, was the offer by the University of Edinburgh of conferring on me the honorary degree of LL.D., which was bestowed in a way too complimentary to be declined, or readily forgotten, in 1872.

While giving some attention to *Chambers's Journal*, now in its forty-seventh year, it may be permitted me to mention that I was able to add a few books to the list already noted: *The Youth's Companion and Counsellor*, 1860; *Something of Italy*, 1862; *History of Peeblesshire*, 1864; *Wintering in Mentone*, 1870; *France: its History and Revolutions*, 1871; *Chambers's Social Science Tracts*, designed to disseminate useful information among the working-classes on subjects connected

with Social, Political, and Sanitary Economy; the present *Memoir*, 1872, and *Ailie Gilroy*, a Scottish story, which appeared shortly afterwards. Some books printed for private circulation do not require to be particularised.

It is not for me to say a single word regarding the influence which *Chambers's Journal* and other publications, edited by my brother and myself, may have exerted in the cause of popular enlightenment during the past forty years. Of that the public must be the judge. Neither—though such might not be uninteresting in some points of view—do I purpose to offer any details regarding the magnitude of the circulation of the various works in which our names have been and still remain mutually associated. What, however, I am bound above all things to do, is to express the sense of obligation felt by my brother during his declining years, and not less vividly entertained by myself, for those gratifying demonstrations of good feeling showered from all quarters in acknowledgment of 'labours,' which should more correctly be defined as 'pleasures,' extending over the greater part of a lifetime. In laying down the pen, what satisfaction can be greater than that of having been a pioneer in that cheap literature movement, which, under a variety of conditions and auspices, has proved one of the conspicuous engines of social improvement in the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER XIV.

ROBERT'S CLOSING YEARS, DEATH, AND CHARACTER.

CHANGE of air and scene is said to work wonders on the overtasked brain. It did so to a certain extent on Robert. The fresh air and tranquillity of St Andrews, with some moderate exercise at golf, had a beneficial effect on his health. He wished for peace, and here it was, enlivened with converse in the society of old friends. He had built for himself a house, with a spacious saloon-library, entering from which was a small apartment fitted up as a study. Environed by his books—a very choice collection—he was now enjoying a luxurious and 'learned leisure.' All task-work was at an end. Sometimes he came for a few days to Edinburgh; and, extending his journey, he occasionally visited one or other of his married daughters. At the new-year, as long as he was able, he made an agreeable excursion across the Tay to Fingask Castle, in the Carse of Gowrie, to pass a day or two according to old fashions with his friends, the Threiplands.

No house, to look at, could be more pleasant than that which he had constructed according to his fancy at

St Andrews. In it he constantly received company, and was always the same kindly and entertaining host. But apart from these receptions, his establishment was cheerless, contrasted with former days, when his home was enlivened by a troop of merry-hearted girls. Possibly it was from a sense of comparative solitude, that he formed a second matrimonial alliance. He married (January 1867) the widow of Robert Frith, a lady of musical accomplishments, and of that liveliness of disposition which was calculated to soothe his declining years.

The university of St Andrews having conferred on him the honorary degree of LL.D., he was subsequently known as the 'Doctor.' After his second marriage, the doctor's dinner and evening parties had something in them of the smack of old times, though all could see he was gradually declining in health; he never failed, however, in his accustomed cheerfulness, his love of music, and his anecdotic, but slowly uttered remarks.

The pen was now taken up only as an amusement; but such was the pleasure he derived from writing, that he felt as if the abandonment of literary exercise would kill him outright. Little by little, he finished a book that he had long been employed upon. It was the *Life of Smollett*, interspersed with characteristic specimens of his writings. This was a slight work, in one volume, but which had the recommendation of adding something to the personal history of Smollett and his family, and presenting a curious fragmentary memoir, written by the novelist's grandfather, Sir James Smollett, a stern old Whig Presbyterian, knighted by William III. This was the last of my brother's printed productions, and with it his literary career closes.

Those who were unacquainted with his private habits of thought may be surprised to know that, in his latter days, he wrote a number of prayers, and graces to be said at meals, all breathing the purest religious spirit. He began the *Life and Preachings of Jesus Christ, from the Evangelists.* It was a work apparently designed for the edification of youth, and was left unfinished. He likewise began a catechism for the young, which he did not live to complete. The reminiscences of his early life, from which some extracts have been given, were also among his latest compositions. The mass of papers which he accumulated, and left as literary remains, is indescribable in variety. A considerable number of these fragments refer to Scottish Songs and Ballads, for which, as already stated, he entertained a great affection.

One of the more bulky papers which he left is a species of inquiry into the so-called manifestations of spiritualism. Without pronouncing an opinion dogmatically, he considered the subject worthy of patient investigation. 'The phenomena of spiritualism,' he says, 'may be the confused elements of a new chapter of human nature, which will only require some careful investigation to form a respectable addition to our stock of knowledge. Such, I must confess, is the light in which it has presented itself to me, or rather the aspect which it promises to assume.' Acknowledging so much, perhaps he thought of a saying he had heard used by Sir Walter Scott, that 'if there be a vulgar credulity, there is also a vulgar incredulity.' In his anxiety for fair-play, he perhaps leant too much to the side of credulity.

Among the papers amassed by my brother, some old

and some new, we have the evidence of a mind that for half a century had never been free from some kind of literary assiduity. His casual thoughts, things he heard spoken of, anecdotes, stories, fragments of family history—all sooner or later assumed shape in sentences and paragraphs. He never forgot anything. His memory, from a faculty of concentrativeness, was altogether remarkable. He could tell you any date in history; he remembered all the people of any note he had conversed with, and how they looked, and what they said, if it was at all worth remembering. Every place he had visited was fresh in his recollection.

With a memory so stored, and of untiring industry, he was always writing down odds and ends, as if assembling materials for books, which years would have been required to execute. From desultory thoughts on a variety of secular subjects in prose and verse, my brother seems to have turned to those literary exercises of a religious nature already specified. The last of these productions appears to have been the catechism for the young, which, like some other compositions, was left unfinished. Though fragmentary, this tract affords a good insight into the writer's love of truth, his acute sense of duty, and regard for the rights of others. I can only quote a few sentences respecting duties in affairs of state. They bear the true ring of my brother's upright character.

'In political procedure, truth, rectitude, forbearance, and respect for rights are as much required as in ordinary society. And as no man can neglect or violate the simplest laws which bind him to his neighbour, without creating some degree of suffering, which is liable

to react against himself, so it is certain that those in authority cannot use it recklessly or oppressively without producing an unhappiness which will turn round to their own annoyance, injury, or destruction. There is, in short, but one rule of duty in the world, and that is summed in "Love your Neighbour." . . . . The errors and delusions of mankind are unfortunately endless; and they are to be deplored, not only as occupying much time and thought uselessly, but as obscuring our ideas as to what is of real importance for the fulfilment of the Divine purposes of our being.'

The year 1870 opened gloomily in that pleasant-looking house at St Andrews. After a short illness, and very unexpectedly, my brother's second wife died on the 18th January. Now was he again in a sense desolate. Yet, though afflicted with this fresh calamity, and broken down in health, he did not repine. His bereavements only tended the more to bring out his true character. In him were now seen united the piety of the Christian with the philosophy of an ancient sage. 'I know,' he said, 'that my days are numbered. My time cannot be long. I feel the gradual but sure indication of approaching dissolution. But don't let us be dismal about it; that would be alike futile and sinful.' And so he spoke as one reconciled to his appointed destiny. Setting his affairs in order, he looked calmly on the advances of the destroyer. He had done his work, and we may be permitted to think that he had done it nobly.

Pale and feeble, he crept about, took short drives, and received visitors as usual; for bodily weakness did not in the least affect his spirits. With one of his married daughters, Mrs Dowie, who had come to visit him, he

walked to the Cathedral Burial-ground, and pointed out the spot where he wished to be interred. It was the interior of the old church of St Regulus. 'There,' said he, 'I hope to have the honour of finding a resting-place; I should certainly be in excellent company, for Mr Lyon, the historian of St Andrews, told me there is a surprising number of bishops interred here.' The desire to be buried in this place of historical note was what might have been looked for. The church of St Regulus is one of the most ancient ecclesiastical structures in Scotland. It dates from the twelfth century, and, as seen by its tall square tower, is built in the Romanesque style. When the cathedral, a more modern and ornamental structure, was laid in ruin by a mob at the Reformation, this adjacent antique church was so far spared, that till this day it remains all, except the roof, in a state of good preservation. Carefully secured as crown property, it cannot be called a part of the general cemetery; and interment within it requires the sanction of the chief commissioner of Her Majesty's Board of Works.

Being recommended change of scene, my brother accompanied Mrs Dowie to her home at West Kirby, near Birkenhead; and thereafter, in April, went with her, by way of Gloucester, to Torquay, where for a time he took up his abode. Here he felt a slight improvement of health, and was able not only to attend and fully enjoy an interesting lecture by Mr Pengelly on the discoveries in Kent's Cavern, but to visit the cave, and make remarks on the objects of natural history that had recently been brought to light. Before returning home, he once more visited a daughter in London, and also his surviving sister, Mrs Wills, at Sherrards, in Hertfordshire, where he greatly enjoyed the beauty of a quiet

rural scene. Brightened up a little by these visits among relatives, he returned to Scotland, in the company of his youngest daughter, who describes the fervency of his emotion in crossing the Border and finding himself again in his native country. He got back to St Andrews in June.

From this time, he did not leave home, where, to keep him company, he was visited, one after the other, by several of his daughters. I went to see him in August, and found him in a frail condition, though able to converse on literary and other topics. His most conspicuous ailment was want of appetite, along with a deadly paleness of countenance. So greatly was his system disorganised, that, on sitting down to table, he could not eat. Nothing that he was solicited to take did him any good, farther than keeping up the spark of life. Still, in a way, he joked and told stories, felt an interest in the stirring news concerning France, and continued to take delight in music.

Towards the conclusion of autumn, a change for the worse took place, and his mind was visibly weakened. Then came winter in more than ordinary severity, with its deadly effects on the aged and invalid. Shortly after the beginning of 1871, he could no longer sit up, and for his accommodation, his study, adjoining the library, had been for some time fitted up as a bedroom. Here I found him in bed on the 27th January. He said he preferred to be in this apartment, for it was on a level with the sitting-rooms, whence he could hear something of the lively conversation of his daughters, and where they could conveniently see him. A piano was placed in the library for his solacement.

Constantly attended by Dr Oswald Bell, and by great

care in nursing, he got through the winter. His married daughters now left him, it being arranged they should come back in turn, when required. Day by day, he lost strength, and one of them, Mrs Dowie, returned. On her appearance, he said he was glad that she had come back to see the last of him. On Sunday, 12th March, he was able to listen to, and heartily appreciate his favourite prayers and psalms in the Morning Service—ejaculating from time to time: 'How true, how beautiful.'

In a note to me, Mrs Dowie gives a simple and touching account of the closing scene:

'On Wednesday the 15th, he described himself as "quite wordless," and just pressing our hands, returned our embraces with fervour. He begged for some music, and was much gratified on my playing to him *Macpherson's Farewell*, an air he greatly admired, and which in former years he used to play himself on the piano, with my accompaniment. Next day, he seemed very torpid, and scarcely spoke to us, more than answering questions. Early in the following morning, life was fleeting away. His last faintly uttered words were: "Quite comfortable—quite happy—nothing more!" And so, with us sitting in silent tears beside him, at about five o'clock on Friday morning, the 17th March, he gently breathed his last.'

At this mournful juncture, I had gone to London on account of the illness of my youngest brother, David, whose health had for some time been in a critical condition, partly from distress at the death of his wife, but principally the result of tastes and habits which had wholly undermined his constitution. He was now in so very delicate a state, that intelligence of the death of Robert brought on a severe paroxysm, which

terminated in his decease on the 21st March. David possessed some estimable qualities, and was a general favourite, but his business career was disappointing. He was very much a repetition of my father—kind and genial, with an exquisite taste for music, sang the Scottish songs beautifully, and was ready on all occasions to help in charitable undertakings. Unfortunately for himself, he came upon the stage of existence after the family struggle was over, and never experienced any of those difficulties to which Robert and I were in our early days exposed, and which, as has been seen, helped to impart a knowledge of the world, and more particularly a knowledge of the value of steadily persevering industry and thrift. I will not dwell on the distressful fact of losing two brothers within the short space of four days, and of having thereby to undertake responsibilities demitted by their decease. Of the last distressing scene at the death of poor David, I was not a witness, for I had been called to St Andrews to assist at the funeral of my brother Robert.

This solemnity took place on the 22d; and to meet the wishes of many who expressed a wish to be present, the arrangements were more of a public character than had at first been intended. Service was performed over the body in the Episcopal chapel, by the incumbent, the Rev. L. Tuttiett; after which the procession of friends and relatives proceeded to the church of St Regulus, in the Cathedral Burying-ground, for interment in which permission had been obligingly granted. On approaching the cemetery, the funeral procession was met by the provost and magistrates of St Andrews, also by members of the Senatus Academicus, with their official insignia. Surrounded by a large and sympathis-

ing crowd, and with the last offices of the church, the body of Robert Chambers was lowered into the grave, where it reposes amidst the dust of ecclesiastics whose names are now only known by the records of history.

In his sermon on Sunday 26th, the Rev. Mr Tuttiett made the following remarks on the deceased:

'A little more than a year ago, when first I came to minister in this church, there sat before me one to whom I could not but turn with especial interest at that time. He was, I knew, a man dear to many of his fellow-worshippers, dear to the place in which he lived, dear to his country, and to many far away. He was a man of high endowments, great and varied knowledge, deep philosophy, sound judgment, and refined taste. He was also—what is far better than all this—a man of upright and unostentatiously religious life—noble and kind in his nature, gentle and modest in his manner, genial and warm in his sympathies, faithful in his friendships, and generous in his dealings. He had come from his recently bereaved home to seek comfort in the common prayers of the Christian Brotherhood with whom he delighted to worship. The text of the sermon he heard on that occasion was taken from Saint Paul's address in the synagogue of Antioch: "David, after he had served his own generation, by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid to his fathers." Those words seem to have struck his mind most forcibly. I shall not forget with what earnestness and solemnity he afterwards commented upon them. They suggested, he thought, "a sublime ideal of human life, and a comfortable view of decease." Certainly, he seems to have kept such an ideal before him. He "served his own generation" in the way God marked out for him faithfully and well. Let me only remind you how much he has done, in conjunction with the brother who now survives him, for the dissemination of that pure, wholesome literature, which, though not coming under the special denomination

of religious, has very greatly served the cause of religion, by humanising and elevating the mind, and thus preparing it for the direct teaching of divine truth. Those who, like myself, have been much interested in the work of popular education in England, must ever honour his name for this service to the generation in which he lived. But my object is not so much to speak his praises, as to gather out for myself and for you the instruction of his life and example. He was a great lover of nature, and a patient, nor by any means an unsuccessful, student of her works. And he was ever ready to encourage the investigations of every man whose heart was loyal to truth, even though the investigator might seem, in his better judgment, to be proceeding upon a wrong principle. But, certainly, in his conversations with myself, he ever evinced the clearest recognition of a Personal God moving amidst His own creation, and ruling it constantly by His Word. . . . . He seems to have had so great a reverence for the deep things of God, and so humbling a sense of his own inability to grapple with them, that he was ever most unwilling to converse about them. He was, I believe, a sincerely attached member of the Episcopal Church of Scotland. He venerated its old historic associations and traditions. He loved its sound and sober standards of faith and devotion. At the same time, he very highly esteemed the ministers of the National Establishment; he did full justice to the good he knew in other communions; and he never counted men offenders for difference of opinion. . . . He seemed to be a man of vigorous, manly intellect, sparing no labour, no self-devotion, in the acquirement of whatever knowledge he thought it good, for himself and for his fellow-creatures, to possess; and, at the same time, a man of pure, gentle, kind, and unselfish character, whom it was impossible to know and not to love.'

Here terminates our Memoir. The principal subject of it had passed away in his sixty-ninth year, a victim, as

it appeared to himself and his family, of that species of excessive literary labour which, by overtasking the nervous system, often proves so fatal. Of the esteem generally entertained for him in his private character, I do not propose to dilate. His genial and kindly disposition, to say nothing of his acquirements, gave him many friends. Never had children a more loving father. In public affairs, he was not qualified to take a prominent part. At one time, as has been seen, he edited a newspaper in the old Conservative interest, but his politics were of a mild type; and latterly he was numbered among the friends of social progress within sound constitutional limits. On few things was he more resolute than in upholding the principles of free trade, the opposition to which, particularly as regards the free importation of corn and other elements of food, he considered to be not only a prodigious economic blunder, but a great national crime. His generosity in extending aid to the needy and deserving was a marked trait in his character; and so was his frugality. Liberal in his dealings, munificent in his donations, he spent little on himself—did not indulge in costly amusements or luxuries. While freely giving a cheque for a large sum to advance some charitable object, he would grudge small outlays on any matter purely personal, except, perhaps, the purchase of books, on which he expended considerable sums.

He never forgot old friends, no matter what was their rank in life, and many who had been less fortunate than himself he privately and delicately assisted. Among these was 'Leila,' who, in life's young dream, he had glowingly celebrated in verse, and who, as has been stated, was led to contract a marriage which, while

frustrating my brother's hopes, proved particularly unfortunate to herself. His early attachment to Leila sobered down in after years to a friendly interest in her hapless fate. As a widow in reduced circumstances, she was indebted to his considerately administered bounty. In his latter days, when broken down in health, he paid her what might be termed a farewell visit. Both were on the verge of the grave, and the interview, as I have understood, was correspondingly affecting. It brought up a crowd of reminiscences almost too choking for utterance. What, in losing him, through the well-meant but indiscreet decision of her mother, had she not suffered —reverse of fortune, and its manifold attendant ills, from which she might otherwise have been exempt! Holding out his hand, which she clasped for the last time, she dropped on it an involuntary tear! It was a parting salutation. They never saw each other again. The final chapter in a sorrowful romance was closed. Leila was not forgotten in my brother's will. He left her a provision sufficient for her moderate wants; but this she did not live to enjoy. She survived her early admirer and benefactor only the short space of three months.

My brother's scientific and literary tastes led him to be elected a Fellow of several learned Societies, in the proceedings of which, more particularly the Royal Society of Edinburgh, he occasionally took a prominent part. He was also, as stated, a member of the Athenæum Club, where he spent much of his time when in London in converse with valued literary friends.

Diligent, accurate, and upright, he had clear views on all ordinary concerns; and no one could be more unscrupulous in his denunciation of whatever was narrow, mean, or dishonourable. If, in any of these

respects, he sometimes cherished resentments that, founded on misconception and prejudice, had better have been forgotten, it is allowable to think that such feelings might fairly be imputed to an overwrought susceptibility of temperament not common in the ordinary walks of life.

In the common language of the world, Robert's life had been 'successful.' From humble beginnings, he had risen to the enjoyment of a fair share of earthly possessions. Let it, however, be understood that he never sought to acquire wealth for its own sake. He had a hatred of mere money-making. Life with him, as I may say with myself, was viewed as a trust for much more noble ends than that of miserly accumulation. At the outset, as has been seen, we had both to encounter some privations, but the struggle was by no means either discouraging or cheerless. Sustained by an earnest resolution to rise, if possible, above the position in which we had been plunged by family disasters, there was an ever present, an unextinguishable impulse upwards. Excelsior!—the very difficulties to be overcome being in themselves a discipline and means of making us usefully acquainted with a variety of amusing character and incident.

Nor should I omit another sustaining influence. Robert and I had from boyhood a keen love of, a veneration for, books. We revelled in imaginative, as well as in the more serious kinds of literature. Poetry and old ballads and legends were our early as well as our later solace. In looking back through a long vista of years to the 'Dark Ages,' I cannot but think that this species of enjoyment was not only actively, but negatively advantageous. There was always for

us something to think of, besides ordinary cares, something to modify and subdue the temptation to mean indulgences. The spare nooks of the mind were kept tenanted by elevating emotions. Poor we were, but so far as the pleasures of reading were concerned, we might be said to be almost on a level with the affluent. Obscure as was our lot, we were enabled, as it were, to come into the presence, and be impressed with the ideas of the great writers of our country. This constant converse with men of literary renown through their printed productions, no doubt helped greatly to prepare Robert, despite his imperfect education, for his future career, and for gaining that general estimation to which he happily attained. To the young and friendless, therefore, his life ought to be alike instructive and inspiriting.

Yet, in the story of this humble and ambitious student, there is really nothing new. You will find the same tale told in proverbs and apologues thousands of years old; the value of diligent application associated with integrity and a cultivation of the nobler sentiments of our nature. From first to last—in early life especially—he offered in his own person an example of one who, in all matters of importance, practised the maxim, *Trust to yourself.* In this spirit, he wrote one of his best moral essays, shewing that the only true way to make a happy progress through the world, is to go on in a dogged, persevering pursuit of one good object, asking no favours, neither courting any special patronage, nor relying on counsels which may be worthless. The principles which he and I laid down could not, unfortunately, be always adhered to without inflicting a degree of pain on ourselves and others. From the outset,

we resolved never to allow our names to be employed in connection with undertakings which did not meet our approval, and over which we could exercise no personal supervision. Unpleasant, if not harsh, as such a rule may appear, it would be better for the commercial world were it more generally acted upon.

Actuated by correct and generous impulses, Robert's career afforded a lesson not only to the young, but to the middle-aged. The talents which had been beneficently given him were employed not alone for his own benefit; they were exercised for the welfare and happiness of others. On all occasions, he assiduously exercised the moral and intellectual faculties, with such development for practical ends as the circumstances of his position admitted. There was furthermore a purity, a simplicity, a geniality about his whole career, which we do not often see so consistently or so amiably demonstrated. In youth, in manhood, and in declining age, in all the social phases through which he passed, he was ever the same gentle and benign being—loved and esteemed by all who knew him.

With regard to my brother's literary character and works, I shall not, having said so much already, attempt any elaborate estimate or analysis. His best services were devoted to his native country, and, with the exception of his illustrious contemporary, Sir Walter Scott, no other author has done so much to illustrate its social state, its scenery, romantic historical incidents, and antiquities—the lives of its eminent men—and the changes in Scottish society and the condition of the people (especially those in the capital), during the last two centuries. His first work, the *Traditions of Edinburgh*, evinced this strong bias and ruling passion

of his mind. He was, as has been stated, assisted by Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe and Sir Walter Scott, but the great bulk of the traditions and all their *setting* were his own. He knew every remarkable house, its possessors, and their genealogy; every wynd and close from the Castle-hill to Holyrood; and in describing these, he poured forth a vast amount of curious reading and information, much of which would have been lost but for the taste and diligence of so enthusiastic a collector. Perhaps this work will hereafter be considered the most unique and valuable of all his labours. His next production, however, has enjoyed a still greater share of popularity. I allude to the *History of the Rebellion of* 1745–6, a work which was very carefully written; and the subject had a wide and deep interest, for the enterprise of Charles Edward was one of those bold and striking events in which history assumes the colour and fascination of romance. As latterly extended, by materials gathered from the *Lyon in Mourning*,* the book has taken its place among our standard historical works, as a faithful and animated narrative of one of the most striking and memorable periods in our national annals.

The other popular histories written between 1827 and 1830 are less original and less valuable than the narrative of the '45. The *Calendars of State Papers* were not then published, nor had antiquarian clubs and family repositories enriched our stores of historical knowledge

* This curious and valuable collection of manuscripts has been bequeathed to the Faculty of Advocates, Edinburgh, in grateful acknowledgment of the many benefits derived from their extensive library.

with those minute and graphic details which add life, and spirit, and individuality to the pages of Macaulay and Froude. My brother's works are of the nature of memoirs. His object was to present a view or portraiture of the external circumstances of the period embraced—a series of military narratives—rather than to attempt 'histories of the legitimate description, which should appeal only to the moral faculties of the select few.' He anticipated Macaulay in desiring to make history interesting to the many, embracing details of the manners, customs, social habits, and daily life of the nation; and with all young readers, and generally with the middle and lower ranks of the Scottish people, he was eminently successful. Of a kindred character with these works was the *Popular Rhymes of Scotland*, an amusing embodiment of folk-lore and mementos of childhood descending from one generation to another in various countries of Europe.

By the establishment of *Chambers's Journal*, my brother was happily led into a new walk of literature. He came forward as a weekly essayist. During fifteen years, as he has himself related, he laboured in this field, 'alternately gay, grave, sentimental, and philosophical,' until not much fewer than four hundred separate papers proceeded from his pen. In these were best seen his imaginative faculties. His familiar and humorous sketches of Scottish life and character are allowed to be true to nature; they were certainly drawn from the life, and may be compared to the descriptions of Henry Mackenzie in the *Mirror* and *Lounger* as to discrimination and fidelity of portraiture; but those of the earlier essayist are confined to the higher ranks of Scottish society. Many of my brother's essays

are also on literary and antiquarian topics, and will be found not only honourable to his diligence as a self-directed and self-upheld student, but replete with correct, humane, and manly feeling. Essays or short disquisitions on scientific subjects were occasionally inserted in the *Journal*, for, as has been shewn, my brother, latterly, devoted much time and study to geology and other departments of physical science—the result of which was the work on *Ancient Sea-Margins*, and a variety of papers communicated to the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

The patient investigation, long journeys, and careful accumulation of facts employed in establishing his geological theories, indicate the true scientific spirit and enthusiasm, and there can be little doubt that, had the circumstances of his early life been more favourable, he would have taken a high place among the men of science who have illustrated the nineteenth century. Considering that his education, as he frankly avows, never cost his parents so much as ten pounds, the wonder is that he did so much.

Referring to my brother's services to geology, Mr Prestwich, President of the Geological Society, in his anniversary address to the Society, 1872, observes: 'In 1852, Mr Robert Chambers published a paper on "Glacial Phenomena in Scotland and Parts of England," in which he was, if not the first, one of the first, to maintain that while our lake district had been the seat of local glaciers, each of which moved down its respective valley, the glaciation of Scotland had been far more general, more like that of Greenland at present. He shewed the prevalence, over all the north of Scotland, of striæ having a general direction north-west and south-east, passing over high hills and traversing the valleys,

independently of the configuration of the country; and he considers that this points to a wide extension of the circum-polar ice, with a southward movement of it over the greater part of Scotland. To the abrasion caused by this enormous mass of ice, he was disposed to attribute, not only the rounded form of many of the hills, but the excavation of many of the valleys; while he assigned to a later period, the more local radiating valley system of glaciers. He instanced, in support of these views, similar phenomena in Scandinavia, where the glaciation has also been general, and passed over tracts four thousand feet in height. In 1848, his well-known work on *Ancient Sea-Margins* appeared. . . . Much as we may differ from the author on the extent of his generalisation and number of sea-levels, the work is full of interesting facts and descriptions, collected with great care and labour, which cannot fail to be useful to future observers. . . . His later descriptive works, *Tracings of the North of Europe*, *Tracings of Iceland*, and others, are full of excellent observations relating to various geological questions connected with the glacial and other phenomena of the Quaternary period.'

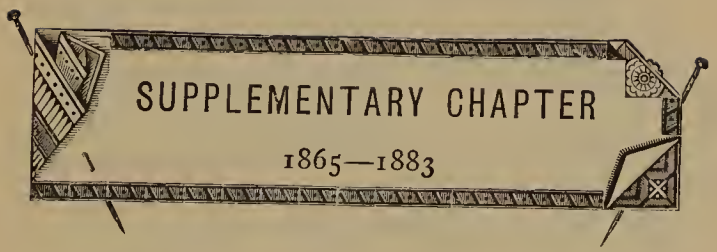
As regards Robert's *Cyclopædia of English Literature*, his *Life and Writings of Burns*, his *Domestic Annals of Scotland*, his *Book of Days*, and the lesser works he produced, sufficient has perhaps been said in the course of this Memoir. On none of his later works did he look back with so much heartfelt pleasure and satisfaction, and none deserves greater praise for its remarkable fidelity, than that concerning Robert Burns. Here, for the first time, the life of the poet, with all its lights and shades, was correctly delineated. The story of Highland Mary, and the dark days of Dumfries, were placed truly before

the world, and allusions in the poems and letters were fully explained. Of all future editions of the Scottish poet, this explanatory and chronological one must form the basis.

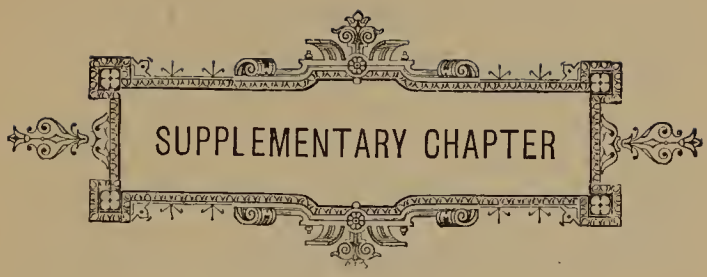
Altogether, as nearly as can be reckoned, my brother produced upwards of seventy volumes, exclusive of detached papers which it would be impossible to enumerate. His whole writings had for their aim the good of society—the advancement in some shape or other of the true and beautiful. It will hardly be thought that I exceed the proper bounds of panegyric in stating, that in the long list of literary compositions of ROBERT CHAMBERS, we see the zealous and successful student, the sagacious and benevolent citizen, and the devoted lover of his country.

W. C.

January, 1873.


SUPPLEMENTARY CHAPTER
1865—1883

ST ANDREW'S CHURCHYARD, PEEBLES.



LATER YEARS AND DEATH OF DR WILLIAM CHAMBERS. 1865—1883.

THE story of WILLIAM and ROBERT CHAMBERS, as told in the foregoing lively and graceful record from the pen of the elder brother, brings the romantic narrative of their lives down to 1871, the year in which Robert died. In 1883, twelve years afterwards, and when eleven editions of this work had gone through the press, William, full of years and honours, passed likewise from the scene of his early struggles and later triumphs, and it falls to another pen to complete the story of his singular life. In so doing, it seems desirable that the history of this later period of William Chambers's career should begin with the year 1865, at which time he was elected to the high and honourable office of Lord Provost of the city of Edinburgh. The brief and modest reference which he has made to the circumstance in the preceding pages, far from adequately sets forth the extent of his services in his official capacity, and the value of these services to the community. It is not only becoming, therefore, but a simple act of justice to his memory, that in this volume those public measures of his which served to round off

and complete a long and varied career of usefulness, should have due prominence given to them in this supplementary record of his closing years.

In the beginning of 1882, the Jubilee year of the *Journal* which he had originated in 1832, Dr William Chambers took occasion to contribute to its pages some notes of his career as associated therewith, which notes he afterwards extended and published in a little volume under the title of *Story of a Long and Busy Life.* In this volume he says: 'In 1865, the citizens of Edinburgh were in want of a Lord Provost, and, to my surprise, fixed on me for the distinguished office. I had hitherto shrunk from taking any prominent part in public affairs; and on the present occasion only acceded to the general solicitations from a wish to promote, if possible, certain measures of social improvement. From a consideration of the state of large cities, I entertained the conviction, that the insalubrity, the vice and misery, that prevail among the more abject classes, are traceable in a great measure to that inveterately wrong system of house construction which consists in narrow courts and alleys branching from the main thoroughfares. I felt that if I could possibly obliterate, by legislation, the hideous resorts in these quarters, a good deed would be done.'

This was the beginning and motive of the Edinburgh City Improvement Act of 1867, which has effected so great a change for the better on the social and sanitary condition of the Scottish capital, and the example of which has since been followed with advantage in more than one of the larger towns of England and Scotland. The passing of the Edinburgh Act was not secured

without considerable opposition in certain quarters; but Dr Chambers had made his account with this. He was aware, from his knowledge of the world, that no such sweeping measure of reform as that proposed by him could possibly be carried through without exciting the hostility of those whose conservative habits of thought, or local and proprietary interests, rendered them averse from engaging in a scheme that would of necessity efface so many of the time-honoured associations of the ancient city. The line of the High Street and Canongate, occupying the crest of the ridge that slopes down from the Castle-rock to Holyrood, has been from time immemorial flanked on both sides by thick rows of houses, only separated from each other by narrow wynds and closes, which branch off at right angles from the main thoroughfare like ribs from the backbone of a skeleton. Many of the buildings, so huddled away down narrow lanes, were at one time the dwelling-places of Scotland's nobility and gentry. But the removal of the court and parliament from Edinburgh, and the gradual change in the character of the population due to the extension of the city outward, had left these aristocratic residences to be divided and subdivided to suit the wants of tenants in a constantly descending social scale, till at length, in many quarters, these densely-populated 'lands'—as such rows of houses are called—were almost wholly given over to the more vicious and profligate of the community, and had become the haunts of crime and misery in every form. These houses, besides harbouring idle and evil-disposed persons, were at the same time the hotbed of fevers and other malignant forms of disease, which no amount of police and sanitary supervision was able adequately to cope with. The

problem how to deal with the difficulty had been the subject of much thought on the part of Dr Chambers, and the conclusion to which he came was, that the only way to improve these quarters of the city was to obtain power to demolish them, or at anyrate a portion of them, and to replace the closely-huddled and tumble-down tenements by broad and open lines of street, accessible to the free air and the sunshine.

This resolution was not unaccompanied by some sentiments of regret. Dr Chambers shared largely in his brother Robert's veneration for the historical antiquities of Edinburgh; and the removal of those old houses, that bore about them, even in their decay, so many memorials of a vanished past—sculptured coats of arms, pious mottoes of ancient founders, dates and names suggestive of many a stirring page in Scottish story—was not to be thought of without regretting the necessities of modern life which rendered their demolition desirable. This feeling of respect for the fading relics of a grand historic past was rational and patriotic; but the social and sanitary claims of present existence were still more urgent, and the work of reform could not with safety be postponed.

Dr Chambers no sooner, therefore, entered upon the duties of his civic office than he set about those preliminary investigations that were necessary to the success of his scheme. The report of the medical officer of the city sufficiently indicated the enormously high death-rate that prevailed in the insalubrious and densely-populated quarters of the Old Town; and the facts thus elicited strongly impressed Dr Chambers with the necessity of at once obtaining statutory powers to enable the Town Council to deal with the question.

The powers thus required would be directed towards the pulling down and removal of the large blocks of old and crowded tenements, the widening of wynds and alleys, and the formation of wide and convenient streets. In the drafting and carrying out of this important scheme, Dr Chambers fully acknowledged the efficient help and assistance which he received in the work from the city officials, chiefly Mr J. D. Marwick, then Town Clerk, and Mr Robert Adam, the City Accountant. The result was the passing of the Improvement Act of 1867, under the operation of which extensive changes have been made in the distribution of population in the city. Spacious streets have taken the place of many of the old narrow, sunless, pestiferous lanes; and the working inhabitants that before were huddled away in dens inaccessible to light and air, have now at their disposal a class of houses with which their former domiciles cannot be brought into comparison, either as regards the nature of their accommodation or the salubrity of their surroundings.

The Improvement Act was in all respects a success. Between 1867 and the time of Dr Chambers's death, there had been expended, under the Improvement Trust, in the purchase and removal of nearly three thousand houses, the sum of £533,657; while there was derived from the sale of new building sites disposed of on the ground thus cleared, and from a small annual rate and other sources of income, the sum of £443,460. The excess of expenditure over receipts at the end of the fifteenth year of the Trust's existence was thus £90,197; but as the Trust will continue till 1887, with various ground annuals and building areas still at its disposal, it is believed that at the end of the twenty years

fixed by the Act, a financially successful issue will have been achieved. This magnificent scheme of urban reform had a strikingly beneficial effect upon the health and general condition of the population; a remarkable proof of which is to be found in the fact, that the death-rate of Edinburgh, which in 1865 was twenty-six per thousand per annum, had in 1882 fallen to eighteen per thousand.

From 1865 to 1868, Dr Chambers worked vigorously at his Improvement Scheme; and when his triennial period of office came to an end in the latter year, he allowed himself to be re-elected for a second period, in order to secure certain portions of his scheme being carried out upon the lines laid down by him. He was successful in effecting his purpose, though not without a stiff fight; and this accomplished, he resigned his office at the end of 1869, and retired into private life.

While the civic rule of Dr Chambers was mainly distinguished by his reforms under the City Improvement Scheme, it was also signalised by the visits of various eminent personages to the city. In May 1866, he had the honour of entertaining at luncheon His Royal Highness Prince Alfred, now Duke of Edinburgh, along with a number of noble and distinguished guests, on the occasion of the opening of the National Museum of Science and Art, in Chambers Street.* It also fell to him as Lord Provost to preside at the presentation of the freedom of the city to three distinguished men, namely, Lord Napier of Magdala, Mr John Bright, and Mr Benjamin Disraeli (afterwards Lord Beaconsfield),

*This is one of the finest of the new streets made under the Improvement Trust, and was so named in honour of Dr Chambers.

then Chancellor of the Exchequer. The presentation to Mr Disraeli took place on the 30th October 1867; and on the previous day, when being entertained at a great public banquet, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in toasting 'the Magistrates of the City,' referred to the application of literature to the world generally as a distinguishing feature of the present age, and added: 'I do not think that the name of Chambers will ever be mentioned in the future without a sentiment of gratitude.' This reference could not fail to be highly pleasing to Dr Chambers, and was not more than his own and his brother's services to literature amply merited.

During the currency of his office as Lord Provost, and in his official capacity, Dr Chambers was presented at Court. This event took place at a levée held at the palace of St James, on the 2d of May 1866, Her Majesty on the occasion being represented by the Prince of Wales. 'On going up the great staircase,' says Dr Chambers, with a touch of natural feeling, 'I confess to being affected by a strange sensation. A recollection of my early struggles rushed across my memory. How strange the metamorphosis, from having been a penniless and unknown youth to being a full-blown dignitary arrayed in rich apparel, and wearing the robes and insignia of office. Without presumption, could I help remembering the notable text in Scripture, which had similarly occurred to the mind of Benjamin Franklin? "Seest thou a man diligent in business? he shall stand before kings."'

The Lord Provost of Edinburgh is *ex-officio* a member of the Commission of Northern Lighthouses, a body invested with the duty of managing all the lighthouses on

the coast of Scotland and the Isle of Man. The Commissioners are in the habit of annually making a tour of inspection, in a steamer called the *Pharos,* belonging to the service, to certain of the lighthouses under their charge; and Dr Chambers on two occasions took part in this official duty. It will be remembered that in 1814 Sir Walter Scott had the honour of being invited to join the Commissioners of the time in their annual tour, and that English literature is indebted to that voyage for the poem of *The Lord of the Isles* and the romance of *The Pirate.* The fact that Scott had thus preceded him in a tour among the picturesque bays and wild islets of the Scottish coast, was to Dr Chambers a matter of pleasing recollection, Scott being one of those authors whom he especially, and for obvious reasons, held in high esteem. Both had a strong love for their native land; its history was to each a matter of every-day study; its old families were enshrined to both in a halo of past associations; its woods and hills and rivers had become mapped in the mind of each by long and loving observation; and each in his own way had used its ancient traditions and historical episodes for the instruction and entertainment of later generations.

Dr Chambers's first trip in the *Pharos* took place in 1866, on which occasion he visited the west coast of Scotland, among the Outer Hebrides. He had also an opportunity of ascending what he calls 'that wonderful triumph of art,' the Skerryvore lighthouse, rising to the height of one hundred and fifty feet above high water. As the vessel approached Skerryvore, which was seen looming dimly through the dull haze, solitary amidst the world of waters, 'the feeling,' he says, 'of those who

had not previously seen it was one of intense pleasure and satisfaction. There are sights of such impressive grandeur as cannot be forgotten, and the recollection of which forms one of the charms of existence. Among these I have reckoned the falls of Niagara, the ruins of the Colosseum, the interior of St Peter's, and now am able to add the Skerryvore lighthouse.'

The second trip in the *Pharos*, which was in the following year, took Dr Chambers along the east coast of Scotland, from the Firth of Forth and Bell Rock lighthouses, to the far islands of Orkney and Shetland. The external characteristics of these islands are familiar to readers of *The Pirate;* and Dr Chambers was careful to note, at Sumburgh Head and other places mentioned in the romance, the extraordinary fidelity of Scott in his descriptions of the scenery, and the charm which his work had given to places and names which otherwise had scarcely been known outside Shetland. Under the title of 'My Holiday,' Dr Chambers wrote an account of these two excursions, in a series of articles which appeared in *Chambers's Journal*, and which were afterwards printed in a small volume for private circulation. These papers are marked by racy bits of description, wise and practical observations on the condition of the scattered populations whom he thus visited, and useful suggestions for their future improvement, especially as regards the development of the fisheries on the western coast.

With his retirement from the Lord Provostship of Edinburgh, towards the end of 1869, Dr Chambers's brief period of public life may be said to have come to an end. He once more fell back into the familiar

groove of his early and middle years, dividing his time between his literary pursuits, and the direction of the large publishing establishment which he and his brother had founded. The latter was now suffering from declining health, and in 1871, as already told in these pages, the end came. Thereafter, Dr William Chambers spent some time abroad, in the district of Mentone, which was his favourite continental resort; and though his pen was not altogether idle, the advance of age rendered him less disposed towards the laborious exertions of his earlier years. Nevertheless, besides writing the present *Memoir* of his brother, and contributing an occasional article to the *Journal* whose welfare he had ever keenly at heart, he managed in these years to produce a few other works. Two of these were suggested by his sojourn abroad. *Wintering at Mentone* was the result of his residence for two winters at that pleasant resort in the Riviera; and *France: its History and Revolutions*, was due to his desire to place in the hands of young persons a simple and succinct account of some of the chief events in the history of France—which history had become, by the Franco-German war of 1870–71, a subject of fresh and exciting interest to both young and old. The latter book has passed through four editions. While abroad, also, he wrote *Ailie Gilroy*, a story which he tells us was founded on facts, and written with the view to put young ladies on their guard against designing adventurers.

During the last six or seven years of his life he began to take a less active part in the concerns of his business, though his interest in its welfare and his knowledge of all its operations were in no degree lessened. The direction of its literary projects, however, including the

management of *Chambers's Journal*, was gradually passed into the hands of his nephew, Mr Robert Chambers, the eldest son of his brother Robert; and the greater rest and leisure which he thus secured gave him the opportunity of carrying out and completing a work which he had long had in contemplation, and with which his name was in his latest years very closely associated, namely, the restoration of the Cathedral Church of St Giles, Edinburgh.

This ancient edifice, dating from about the twelfth century, is closely connected with the leading events of Scottish history, and was the scene of many remarkable episodes in Reformation times, as well as during the later struggle in Scotland between Episcopacy and Presbyterianism. When the ecclesiastical changes consequent upon the establishment of Protestantism in the sixteenth century had put an end to the old Roman Catholic ritual, and St Giles' had become a place of plain Presbyterian worship, its long-drawn aisles were not thought advantageous to the preachers of the day, and the interior of the edifice was consequently partitioned off into a number of separate places of worship. The stone walls which thus cut the fine old church into small and meaningless sections, entirely destroyed the effect of its original architecture; while the erection of the high steep galleries which filled the side aisles and blocked up every possible recess, had been effected at the cost of much hacking and hewing of the ancient stone-work. A so-called process of rehabilitation of the edifice in 1830, when the exterior of the building was newly incased in stone, helped still further to obliterate its historic features; the stately old tower, surmounted by its finely-proportioned

mural crown, being now perhaps the only characteristic of its external aspect which can really be regarded as ancient. The interior, also, at the same time underwent certain other changes for the worse. In order that the preacher might be seen by as many of the congregation as possible, the massive octagonal pillars in the nave were sliced down into narrow fluted shafts, altogether out of keeping with the general character of the architecture; and in order that room might be made for the galleries, arches and capitals were ruthlessly cut into, and the whole place made as unlike its ancient self as possible. What was done in the nave, was to a great extent imitated in the transepts and choir; while the side chapels were either demolished, or, as was the case with the historic Albany Aisle, completely blocked up with the unadorned wood-work of galleries and pews.

The idea of restoring the Church of St Giles to something like its ancient condition—as far at least as regarded the interior, for the exterior was hopelessly changed—occurred to Dr Chambers during those years when he was Lord Provost of Edinburgh. He had frequently occasion to attend public worship officially along with the other Magistrates and members of the Town Council, the place of assemblage being the choir of the old cathedral. This portion of St Giles' was known as the High Church; but there were other two places of worship within the edifice, all three being divided from each other by stone walls that formed no part of the original building, and with separate congregations meeting in each. It was while sitting in the choir, or High Church, in the elevated gallery reserved for the Magistrates and Town Council of the

city, that Dr Chambers, as he tells us, 'conceived the idea of attempting a restoration of the building, and producing a church in which the people of Edinburgh might feel some pride.'

The objects he originally had in promoting the restoration of the building, in the first place by public subscription, and latterly at his own cost, have been clearly defined by himself, and were never in any essential respect departed from. He did not forget that such an edifice as St Giles' was not primarily designed for the purposes of modern Presbyterian worship; and his desire was to restore its interior as nearly as possible to its original condition, when, as he remarks in a paper which he read on the subject in 1867, 'the whole interior was an open space, with only such furnishings as pertained to a dignified ecclesiastical structure previous to the Reformation.' 'With the removal of the partition-walls,' he said, 'my aim goes the length of clearing out the whole interior, so as to bring it back, as nearly as possible, to what it was originally.' The choir, or High Church, was the first portion of the building which he proposed to renovate; more could not be attempted until the congregations which occupied the other two divisions were removed elsewhere. But he was hopeful that even these obstacles to the complete restoration of the fabric would in course of time disappear; in which case, he said, 'the proposal I would offer is, to clear away the dividing walls, take down all the galleries, remove the pews, bring all to a uniform level, and leave an open stretch of pavement throughout. Excepting the partially inclosed choir, the whole edifice would be free to the perambulation of visitors.' He further hoped that the restoration of the building and per-

manent clearance of the nave would give an opportunity for the erection therein of monuments to distinguished Scotchmen of past and future times, and that St Giles', in a sense, might come to be viewed as the Westminster Abbey of Scotland.

When once the idea of the restoration had suggested itself to him, he entered into the matter with his accustomed decision and vigour. An influential and enthusiastic public committee, of which he was chairman, was shortly formed, with the object of collecting funds to defray the cost of the proposed work. The part of the edifice to which the efforts of the Restoration Committee were first directed, was, as had been proposed, the choir; and the committee was fairly successful in its efforts. The renovation of the choir was not at this time so thorough as might have been desired; but still the improvement effected upon its appearance was very marked, and it might once more lay claim to the artistic beauty of which former generations had thoughtlessly deprived it.

The first renovation of the choir was finished in 1873; and five years afterwards, one of the other two portions of the building fell into disuse as a place of worship. Dr Chambers, whose zeal for the complete restoration of the church had never abated, took advantage of this opportunity, resolving to apply the same process of renovation to it that had been so effective in the choir. But this time he determined to relieve the Restoration Committee of any further trouble and responsibility, and to proceed entirely on his own judgment, and at his own cost. Even the most enthusiastic of committees rarely work without more or less of friction, which means in the end irritation and delay;

and Dr Chambers's advanced age, and the extent of the task which he had now set before himself to accomplish—namely, the complete restoration and opening up of the whole interior of St Giles'—rendered it necessary that the work should be done as smoothly and expeditiously as possible, if he were to see the end of his labours. In 1878, therefore, and the following year, he succeeded in restoring the southern aisles of the church, including the Preston and Chepman Aisles. The Preston Aisle, as renovated, exhibits a beauty of groining which is said not to be surpassed, if equalled, in Great Britain; while under the Chepman Aisle, which had been degraded into a coal-cellar, is the vault wherein were deposited the mortal remains of the great Montrose.

There now only remained to complete the restoration of this fine old historic church, the nave and the north transept, with the adjoining chapels. Before this work could be begun, however, elaborate arrangements had to be made, by Act of Parliament and otherwise, for the removal of the congregation then worshipping in the nave, the arrangements being burdened by the necessity of collecting from the public a sum of £10,500 to provide that congregation with a church elsewhere. Conditional upon this sum being raised, and the keys of the building handed over to Dr Chambers by Whitsunday 1880, he, on his part, undertook to carry out and complete the work of restoration. A committee was formed, which charged itself with the collection of the sum in question; but the appeal made to the public was at first only meagrely responded to, many being disposed to regard the restoration as rather of a denominational than a national character. But the intentions of Dr

Chambers were clearly public and national, and not sectarian in any sense. The renovation proposed by him was undertaken with the view, not of benefiting any particular Church or congregation, but of beautifying a neglected national edifice, and rendering it in some degree a place of national utility—in his own words, a Westminster Abbey of Scotland. As these patriotic and undenominational objects of Dr Chambers became clearer to the public, principally through the advocacy of the newspaper press, which all throughout had favoured his project, money began to come in more freely, and from all sections of society. It was not, however, till the spring of 1881 that the money was fully secured, and the congregation removed from the nave of St Giles'. The workmen were thenceforth for two years busily engaged upon this last stage of the restoration, which included not only the nave and northern chapels, but also a more complete renovation of the choir than it had undergone in 1873.

Unfortunately, while this work of restoration was being pressed forward, the health of the Restorer himself was evidently failing. At this time he was in his eighty-second year, and for a long while had suffered periodically from severe neuralgic pains in the head, followed by more or less of prostration of the system. In the spring of 1881, these attacks recurred more frequently and with greater vehemence, accompanied by fits of sickness of a depressing kind. In the summer he went to Portobello, a watering-place in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh, where he stayed for some weeks, and was so much benefited by the change, that he was able to spend the autumn, as had long been his annual custom, at his estate of Glenormiston, in Peebles-

shire.* While not altogether free from occasional neuralgic attacks, he was, during 1882, somewhat improved in his general health, though becoming physically weaker. But it was not till the beginning of 1883 that his condition became such as to alarm his friends. Throughout the early spring of that year, it could be seen that he was perceptibly breaking down both in mind and body. Till then, and even while suffering the most acute pain, his intellect had remained untouched; he thought, and spoke, and acted, in all matters of business or advising that came before him, with the clearness and promptitude of his most vigorous years. But now it was obvious that his memory was failing, and his mind exhibiting otherwise symptoms of decay. 'The keeper of the house was beginning to tremble, and the strong man to bow himself.' Happily, his illness was no longer accompanied by acute suffering; it was simply a gradual exhaustion of the vital energies, the machinery of life worn done by old age and use.

During the last year of his life, the St Giles' restoration formed the chief object of his thoughts, and reports were regularly made to him of the progress of the work and

* The estate of Glenormiston was purchased by Dr Chambers in 1849, for the sum of £25,000. It is finely situated on the Tweed, in the parish of Innerleithen, in the eastern district of the county of Peebles, and about five miles from his native town. Immediately after obtaining possession of the estate, Dr Chambers carried out extensive improvements upon it, adorning and beautifying it in many respects. He formed a new approach, with entrance lodge, drained a large part of the land, reconstructed the farm-steading, and adapted the mansion-house to his requirements; these and other improvements costing him the further sum of £10,000.

all that pertained to it. In 1879, he had written a *Historical Sketch of St Giles' Cathedral*, embracing an account of the restorations up to that year; and perhaps the last of his suggestions as an author and publisher was when, about a month before his death, and now no longer able to wield the pen himself, he requested one of his literary assistants to prepare a new edition of the *Sketch*, giving therein the final details of the restoration work. He was naturally desirous to live to see St Giles' in its renovated condition; and with this view the operations, many of which involved much careful and artistic manipulation, had been for two years pushed rapidly forward. From 1872 onward, the whole of the restoration work had been done by the advice and under the personal superintendence of Mr William Hay, architect, Edinburgh, whose knowledge of ancient ecclesiastical architecture is only equalled by the refined taste and artistic skill which he brought to bear upon the work. By the spring of 1883, the process of renovation was all but completed, and with a success even more striking than had been anticipated. Portion after portion of the ancient edifice had been cleared out, and each in succession renovated and restored, with the result of bringing back to the interior, so far as architectural effect is concerned, very much the appearance which we may suppose it to have had immediately before the Reformation. The magnificent restoration which Dr Chambers thus accomplished, was executed at a cost to himself of between twenty and thirty thousand pounds. The re-opening of the church for public worship was fixed for Wednesday the 23d of May 1883; but three days previously

Dr Chambers had passed away, and the imposing ceremony of the 23d was rendered all the more solemn and impressive by the regretful feeling that he who had conceived and executed the design of restoration had died without witnessing the consummation of his work.

His end, though not unexpected, came somewhat sooner than had been anticipated. During the first two weeks of May he had exhibited from time to time alarming symptoms of physical exhaustion, from which, however, he occasionally rallied, giving still some faint hopes of partial recovery. But on Friday the 18th of that month, he fell into a kind of lethargy, which continued throughout the whole of Saturday, and into the morning of Sunday the 20th, when, a few minutes before two o'clock, he calmly breathed his last.

His death was attended in the public mind by two poignant sources of regret. One of these we have already alluded to, namely, his death on the very eve of the re-opening of the restored St Giles'. The other was the flattering circumstance that, only two weeks before his death, Her Majesty the Queen, through her Prime Minister, Mr Gladstone, had offered Dr Chambers the honour of a baronetcy. Two years previously, Mr Gladstone had, in complimentary terms, made him an offer of a knighthood; but that offer he then respectfully declined. This later renewal of the honour, however, in the shape of a baronetcy, Dr Chambers accepted; but his end came before the title had been formally bestowed. The great number of letters following immediately upon the announcement, and addressed to him by readers of *Chambers's Journal* in all parts of the United Kingdom, congratulating him upon

the honour Her Majesty had at length done him, formed a strong indication of the interest which the public felt in the matter. His death, therefore, ere the honour had been formally conferred upon him, could not fail to stimulate and increase the general regret when it was intimated that WILLIAM CHAMBERS was no more.

The re-opening of St Giles' Cathedral for public worship had been already fixed for the 23d of May; and though at first it was naturally felt that the occurrence in the meantime of Dr Chambers's death might lead to a postponement of the ceremony, other considerations showed how impossible it was to stay a great public demonstration for which preparations had been making for weeks previously. It had been the desire of those charged with the arrangements, that the Queen should perform the opening ceremony; but, in the unavoidable absence of Her Majesty, the duty was performed by the Right Hon. the Earl of Aberdeen, Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. The ceremony was in all respects a magnificent one, and was attended, not only by great numbers of the general public, but by representatives of all the chief public corporations in Scotland, including the Judges of the Court of Session, the Faculty of Advocates, the Society of Writers to the Signet, the Solicitors before the Supreme Courts, the Magistrates and Town Councillors of Edinburgh, the Senatus of the University, the Royal Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons, the Royal Scottish Academy, the High Constables of Holyrood, the Convener and Deacons of the Trades, and many other public bodies, besides almost the whole of the members of the General

Assembly of the Church of Scotland. A choir of two hundred voices, with the organ, led the service of praise; and a congregation of not fewer than three thousand persons crowded the immense building in every part. The judges, magistrates, clergy, and almost all the other representatives of public bodies present, were in their official robes; and as deputation after deputation entered the church, and slowly filed up the nave to their respective places in the choir, the sight, with its imposing solemnity and occasionally picturesque effects, was suggestive of the pageants of an older day, when Scottish kings and queens graced with their presence the hallowed precincts of St Giles'. The opening sermon was preached by the minister of the Church, the Rev. J. Cameron Lees, D.D.; and probably no one had addressed so large and distinguished an audience within the old historic edifice since the day when John Knox preached in the same place the funeral sermon of the Regent Moray.

From the spring of 1881, Dr Chambers had practically been the custodian of the Church of St Giles, and the formal part of the opening ceremony consisted in the transference of the keys of the building from the possession of his representatives to that of the Queen's Commissioner. With this object, Mr Robert Chambers, as representing his deceased uncle, awaited Lord Aberdeen at the west door of the Cathedral, and there, through the medium of Lord Provost Harrison, delivered the keys into his lordship's hand, who, after the formal ceremony of opening the door of the church, passed them into the custody of the minister, Dr Lees. Dr Chambers, feeling in the later weeks of his life the improbability of his being able to attend the opening

ceremony, had, with his characteristic forethought, prepared an address which, in the event of his absence, was to be read to Her Majesty's representative. This address, which was now read by Mr R. Chambers, is remarkable for the singular grace and simplicity of its language, and will be of permanent interest as among the last literary compositions dictated by the Restorer of St Giles' :

To His Grace the Lord High Commissioner.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR GRACE,

I esteem it a high honour that Her Majesty has commissioned one so respected and esteemed, and whose name and family are so dear to Scotland, to represent her on this occasion.

It is with much thankfulness that I have completed the restoration of this venerable Cathedral.

The interests of Edinburgh, where I have spent so many years, are very dear to me ; and it is as a token of my affection that I have endeavoured to restore her historic church to somewhat of its former beauty.

It is ample reward to me to know that my work has met with the approval of my beloved Sovereign, and so many of her Scottish subjects.

May I ask Your Grace to present my humble duty to Her Most Gracious Majesty, and to express my deep gratitude for her recognition of my labours.

I have now to present to Your Grace the keys of St Giles', which have been intrusted to me for a time, and to ask Your Grace to open the church in name of Her Majesty the Queen.

W. CHAMBERS.

The opening ceremony outside was followed by appropriate devotional services in the interior of the church ; after which an eloquent sermon was preached

by Dr Lees from the words in Joshua iv. 21: 'What mean these stones?' In the course of the sermon, and in answer to the question of the text as applied to the old historic fabric in which the congregation were assembled, the preacher said:

'To-day these stones mean—henceforth they will mean—something more than before. They will be associated, not alone in our day, but in days to come, with noble munificence. They will be the monument of a great and generous Scottish man. A feeling of sadness has mingled with the ceremonial of to-day, a pathos which has given a solemnity to our service greater than any outward accessories could ever give it. There has been a presence to-day within these walls mightier than any earthly presence, the shadow that awes even the lightest-hearted into silence. We are celebrating the completion of a great work. The generous heart that prompted it, the thoughtful mind that carried it out, is for ever at rest. Another day will pass, and he will be borne here on the way to his burial, and his obsequies will be celebrated amid the beauty he created, but which he was never to see. There is something inexpressibly touching in life thus closing on the threshold of achievement. It is ever so. The great leader dying with the light of the promised land in his eyes; the funeral of the Persian poet passing out of one gate of the city, while camels bearing the gold that was to reward him were coming in at the other; the last words of the laborious writer, Buckle, "My poor book!" "When the keys," Dr Chambers wrote, "are put into my hands, not an hour will be lost in accomplishing this important undertaking, and God grant me life and health to carry through the work to a successful issue." His reverent prayer has been answered. How successful the issue has been, you can all see. I know it lay very close to the heart of my dear old friend. Weak and feeble though he was, and confined long to his room, he knew every detail of what was being done here. "If

God," he once said to me feelingly, as he clasped my hand one day in parting with him, "enables me to finish this work, I will sing my *Nunc Dimittis.*" Often he told me of the motives that weighed with him in undertaking this work. He believed that this restored building might teach great historic lessons, that it might inspire men with the feeling of reverence, that it might be a source of good and sweetening influence in this city. All this is in keeping with the rest of his life. It is a life, like that of his distinguished brother, of which Scotsmen may be proud. In its record of perseverance, endurance, foresight, perfect integrity, it displays the best features of the national character. The poor lad by honest industry rising to eminence, becoming the chief citizen of Edinburgh, inaugurating sanitary measures which lowered the terrible death-rate of the inhabitants of its formerly overcrowded tenements ; above all, becoming the founder of that popular literature which is so marked a feature of our time. These are things which will not be soon forgotten. There are few who did not rejoice when our gracious Sovereign intimated that she was to confer on him well-merited honour. There are none who did not feel a pang of sorrow at hearing how he passed away before that honour reached him. It is a touching story from first to last—a touching, yet, in many ways, an elevating and instructive one. So long, my brethren, as these stones remain one upon another, will men remember the deed that William Chambers hath done, and tell of it to their children.'

Lord Aberdeen, at the conclusion of the service, communicated to Her Majesty the successful completion of the ceremony of re-opening the Cathedral of St Giles, and a telegram was received in reply from the Queen's secretary, Sir Henry Ponsonby, with a message from Her Majesty, stating that the Queen had heard with sincere regret of the death of Dr Chambers

before even his title had been gazetted, and expressing Her Majesty's satisfaction at the success of the proceedings.

Friday, the 25th of May, was the day fixed for the funeral. It had been Dr Chambers's wish that he should be buried in his native town of Peebles, in the old St Andrew's churchyard there, beside the dust of his ancestors; and preparations were made accordingly. The Magistrates and Town Council of Edinburgh resolved that the remains of the man who had at one time filled the civic chair, and whose public reforms and private munificence had done so much to enhance the city's attractions, should be honoured with a public funeral. The members of the Magistracy and Town Council, with other dignitaries of the city, in their official robes, met therefore, on the morning of the 25th, at Dr Chambers's house, No. 13 Chester Street, and accompanied his remains to St Giles' Cathedral, where a funeral service was to be held. As the procession moved off, a muffled peal of bells was rung from the tower of St Mary's Cathedral; and on the public buildings of the city, flags were hoisted half-mast high. All along the route, numerous spectators lined the streets, and in the vicinity of St Giles' a large crowd had assembled. Inside the church was an immense congregation of waiting worshippers, the silence only broken from time to time by the muffled stroke of the great bell tolling in the tower. On the arrival of the cortege at the church, the coffin, covered with wreaths of flowers, was carried shoulder-high up the choir to the ancient chancel, and placed in front of the communion-table, with the foot to the east. As the solemn procession

entered the holy fane which the patriotism of the deceased had so beautified and adorned, the whole assembled congregation rose to their feet, while the low pealing of the organ filled the aisles. The Rev. Dr Lees then proceeded with an appropriate service, strikingly suggestive of the solemn rites which the old cathedral walls had witnessed in earlier times, this being doubtless the first public funeral ceremony observed within St Giles' since the date of the Revolution. Its occurrence on this occasion was singularly befitting, as being the last honours paid to the remains of one who had lovingly restored to the nation its metropolitan church in all its original magnificence and beauty.

The service over, the funeral procession was re-formed; and on its way to the Waverley Station, whence the remains were to be conveyed by rail to Peebles, the cortege passed through great crowds of spectators assembled on the Mound and Princes Street, and in the vicinity of the railway station. On arriving at Peebles, the funeral party was joined by the Magistrates and Council of that burgh, with many others in their public or private capacity, and proceeded to the St Andrew's churchyard, about a mile from the town. The bell was tolled from the old church steeple; the shops were shut, and the blinds of the houses drawn; and all along the route, men and women and children had everywhere come out to witness the funeral of a townsman of whom the community of Peebles have reason long to be proud. As the procession passed within a few yards of the house in which he and his brother Robert had been born more than eighty years before, it was impossible to avoid

being struck by the contrasting circumstances of that time and the present. It was exactly seventy years since he had left his native place, with his parents, a poor boy, departing thence in misfortune and distress; and now his remains were being brought thither amid the regrets of a grateful nation, and honoured by the personal sympathies of his country's sovereign.

The secluded churchyard of St Andrew surrounds the ruins of what was once the parish church of Peebles, founded by the enterprising Bishop Jocelyn of Glasgow in 1195, and, as its name implies, dedicated to the national saint. The church, of which only a fragmentary wall remains, was built of the hard undressed stone of the district, with a tower at its west end, which had for long stood in tolerable preservation, though roofless, ragged, and windowless. Towards the close of Dr Chambers's life, he had made preparations for strengthening and, so far as was needful for its further preservation, restoring this ancient tower, and the work had only been begun a few weeks before his decease. The workmen had suspended their labours on the day of the funeral; but as the company approached the churchyard, and saw the old tower encaged in its scaffolding of wood-work, with the other evidences of building operations lying around, it seemed as if the notable activities of the deceased had not quite died with his death, but were still to be prolonged on the very site of his grave. The place prepared for the reception of his remains, and containing also the dust of his father and mother, lies within the space which must in ancient times have been included within the precincts of the now dilapidated church. When the coffin had been borne to the grave, and placed ready

for interment, the Rev. Dr Lees read a few passages of Scripture, and offered up a touching and impressive prayer, in the course of which he thanked God for the long and useful life which had been granted to him whom they had now brought to the place of burial, for the honour which had been bestowed upon him, and, above all, for the good which he had been able to do in this world for the benefit of others. The sun shone down brightly on the throng of mourners as they stood uncovered beside the open grave, listening to the solemn words that alone broke the noonday stillness. In a few minutes the simple rites were over, dust returned to dust, and ashes to ashes, and he to whom were now paid the last obsequies of earth was left to his long repose, overshadowed by the green hills of his native valley, and almost within sound of the silver Tweed.

On the following Sunday, further public reference was made in St Giles' Cathedral to the death of Dr Chambers. The Rev. Archibald Scott, D.D., minister of St George's parish, Edinburgh, had been appointed by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland to preach before the Lord High Commissioner and the members of Assembly on the morning of that day. The preacher chose for his text, Psalm xvii. 15: 'As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness;' and at the close of his discourse spoke as follows, in allusion to the death of Dr Chambers:

'We surely make no descent from the solemn themes on which we have been meditating, when, ere we close, we desire to recall to your affectionate remembrance him to

whose munificence we owe this ancient building, which has again been dedicated to the holiest of uses. He too, having liberally served his day, was called away before his eyes could see the completion of his last and perhaps most cherished work. Indeed, were there no truth in such a text as ours, there would be bitter satire, and not melting pathos, in the fact that all the use he personally got of that on which he spent his treasure, was the celebration in it of his funeral obsequies. From such an incident might there be drawn the mocking conclusion that life is vanity. But life is never vanity, nor is the world worthless to any one who really tries to do on earth some unselfish and worthy work. The man whose memory we desire to cherish did not despise the world; but, as a true man should do, he tried to use and make the most of it. He endeavoured to improve it, and make it a scene of more elevated happiness to himself and to all around him, and to all who should come after him; and no one shall say that he tried in vain. His example of patient, earnest, and victorious struggle, in which he rose from poverty to opulence, and from obscurity to the highest service and honour which his city could bestow; his veneration for his country's story, the pleasure which he took in her very stones leading him to rescue from out misuse, and to render worthy of its sacred object, this great historic fane, would be themselves a precious legacy; while his activities as a public man, and especially that stream of pure and healthy literature, of useful information, which he helped to send into every land and nearly every home in which the English tongue is spoken, are surely results which make this life of ours worth living to achieve. Bravely he did the work which his hand found to do; fearlessly he took the good which God provided; and now, having had his happy turn, and having fulfilled his hour—sooner, indeed, than we had wished—he has cheerfully given place to others who follow. Touched by the solemn lesson which his dying has imparted to the dedication of his offering, let us begin or carry

on our work for our day and generation in the unselfish spirit of those who by Christ do believe in God, and who, not having received the earthly promises, if God so ordain are willing to die in faith—confessing that we are strangers and pilgrims on the earth, and desiring a better country, that is, a heavenly.'

The career of the two brothers, William and Robert Chambers, has been set forth with such interesting and minute detail in the foregoing chapters of this work, that not much remains to be added by way of incident. It may not, however, be out of place to give here some particulars as to the personal habits and character of the two men, more especially of those qualities of mind and disposition which rendered their lifelong partnership and co-operation of so much advantage to themselves and to the public. A high degree of literary ability is rarely found associated in the same person with serviceable business habits; and this, not necessarily from any fundamental inequality of mind between the man of business and the man of letters, but mainly because of the very opposite lines of thought which they respectively cultivate, and of which the tendency in each is to become habitual. Both pursuits, as in the case of Grote, may be followed by the same individual within certain lines; but the essential elements requisite to high achievement in either department of effort, would almost appear to be, as a rule, mutually exclusive. Burns was a brilliant poet, but an indifferent farmer; the Ettrick Shepherd could charm the soul away into Fairyland, but he could not keep business embarrassments from his door; Rogers was a

prosperous banker, but only a mediocre writer of verses. Among the higher names in literature, Scott to a very considerable extent possessed the rare conjunction in himself; but even he, while eminently successful as an author, greatly miscalculated in his commercial projects, and suffered accordingly. Whether William and Robert Chambers would, apart from each other, have risen to the height which, together, as authors and fellow-publishers they attained to, is perhaps an idle question; but there can be no reasonable doubt that much of the material success and prosperity of both was due to the extremely happy combination which their respective types of mind and character enabled them to form.

In personal appearance the two brothers were not much alike. William was about the middle size, thin, muscular, and wiry; Robert slightly taller, and of a fuller and more sanguine habit. Both were men of marked appearance, more especially the younger, and it was no uncommon thing for strangers to turn and look after Robert Chambers in the street, certain that he, though unknown to them, was no ordinary individual. In youth, William was dark in hair and complexion; Robert of a fairer type, with brown hair; but at quite an early period of their lives their hair was tinged with white, and became wholly or nearly so before they had reached the age of fifty. This, however, in no way marked any premature decay either of mental or bodily energy; for Robert lived to within a little of his seventieth year, and William reached his eighty-fourth, both continuing their literary labours almost to the last.

In the personal habits and mental characteristics of

the two brothers, there were, with certain points of resemblance, almost as many points of departure as in their personal appearance. William, in early and middle life, was a man of quiet and reserved habits, not caring to mix largely with his fellows, devoting all his energies of mind and body to his business and its concerns. Robert, while not less industrious and painstaking in his own sphere of labour, lived, upon the whole, a freer and larger life, was courted by society and mingled readily in its enjoyments, kept a hospitable table and was frequently at the tables of others. William was inclined to be somewhat unyielding in his business relations, while his own sterling integrity and unvarying self-control tended to make him but little indulgent towards the faults or weaknesses of others; yet upon occasion he could show real kindness, and in private was known to do many generous actions of which the world knew nothing. Robert was not less upright in all his relations of life, but was more ready to evince consideration for the mistakes or misfortunes of others, benevolence being one of the most striking traits in his character. William was a man of business first, a man of letters afterwards. Indeed, his efforts in literature may be regarded as originally somewhat of an accident of his calling as printer and bookseller; he found it convenient and profitable to provide in this manner work for his own press, and he followed out the practice with characteristic perseverance and aptitude, till in a few years he achieved both facility and success in the use of the pen. Had he, instead of having been apprenticed to an Edinburgh bookseller, become indentured to the grocer in Tolbooth Wynd, Leith, who sent him sadly

away as being too small and weak for the duties assigned, it is just possible that, while he could hardly have failed, from his splendid business qualities, to have risen to the first rank of merchants in that ancient port, he might never have sought to pen anything more enduring than business advices and bills of lading. Robert, no matter in what position of life he might have been placed, would have drifted into literature. He was essentially a literary man, loving learning and books for their own sake, and endowed with an amazing versatility of genius and an equally amazing capacity for work. It was, therefore, the elements of power, the existing potentialities, which these two remarkable brothers possessed between them—each with his own individual faculties, and these differing not so much in kind as in degree—that, when welded together by a common interest, enabled them to execute a series of labours, and to effect a succession of triumphs, which have rendered their names conspicuous as publishers and producers of popular literature. Each had precisely what the other required to give the requisite force and stability to their undertakings; and the combination of their resources was, as we shall see, effected at the very time when their united efforts were destined to be most serviceable to both.

A fuller consideration of the personal characteristics of the two brothers will bring out the above features more clearly. Both were men of unwearying diligence, but the industry of each was variously exemplified. William, as has been already indicated, and as may be gathered from his own account of his early privations and struggles, was a man of formal and exact habits, somewhat reserved in manner, who in business hours allowed nothing to stand

in the way of the work upon which he might be engaged, and who carried out all his operations with systematic, almost mechanical precision. This, indeed, was one of the valuable secrets of his success. He never put off till to-morrow what he could do to-day; and whatever he undertook to do, he did to his very best, and expected every one about him to do the same. In the preparation of his articles for the press, he did not put much stress upon mere literary form; his chief object was, to have something definite to say, and to say it as clearly and tersely as possible. With him, literary grace was a secondary matter; lucidity, the primary. When engaged upon any bit of literary work, he allowed his whole mind to become engrossed in it. In preparing his manuscript for the press, or revising his proofs, he would rally his thoughts to the best mode of expression by muttering to himself, at times rising from his chair and walking about the room, still continuing his half-audible remarks, until the expression or idea he might be in search of occurred to him, when he would hastily return to his desk, resume his seat, dash down the words that were required, and proceed with his task as before. If similarly engaged, as he often was, in the evenings in his own house, however much engrossed he might be in the work before him, the moment the clock struck the hour of nine, down dropped his pen, in went the stopper into his ink-glass, and the whole thing was set aside and apparently forgotten for the night. The supper-tray was then brought in, the meal being of the simplest kind—generally only a few biscuits, with the ingredients of a single glass of toddy. These he partook of, chatting

pleasantly and happily the while to whoever might be with him; and by ten o'clock he was in bed, appearing as regularly next morning at the breakfast table at eight o'clock. Such was the simple tenor of his daily habits from year to year.

But while not given to much festivity either in his own house or abroad, he was exceedingly happy to have at his table from time to time such friends as Peter Fraser, with his inimitable drolleries; James Ballantine, author of 'Ilka blade o' grass,' and other fine lyrics; and Sheriff Gordon, of versatile notoriety. On such occasions, Dr Chambers exhibited a wealth of geniality and bonhomie which those who knew him only in his business hours would scarcely have expected. He was an admirable *raconteur* of Scotch stories, and could sing with spirit and expression some of our old Scotch songs, such as 'The Ewie wi' the crookit horn,' 'Maggie Lauder,' and the like. Or if an impromptu dance were got up, he would foot it with the best. In later years he was in terms of intimate friendship with Dean Ramsay, and gave that genial divine not a few of the telling anecdotes which have drawn tears of laughter from many a reader of the *Reminiscences*. To visitors his manner was homely and genial, and left upon them the impression of a man who had a warm and generous heart behind the transparent barrier of a slight outward reserve.

A very pleasing feature in his character was his love of domestic animals, especially of dogs. He and his wife had in succession more than one canine pet, and he was never tired of watching their peculiarities and habits, encouraging their gambols, and narrating their feats of wisdom and trickery to his friends. Of

more than one of them he has left some record in the pages of *Chambers's Journal;* and their death, in one or two cases, caused him more real pain than he would probably have cared to make known. A donkey, which answered to the name of Donald, and which he kept at Glenormiston, was also a subject of much interest to him, and the idiosyncrasies of this long-eared friend afforded him on one occasion matter for a sprightly and amusing paper.

William Chambers's life was, in the main, one of arduous and unremitting labour. The habits which he had acquired in early years remained in part with him to the last. For instance, he always ate his food hastily—it might almost be said, bolted it; a relic, doubtless, of the time when he worked sixteen hours a day, and allowed himself only a quarter of an hour for his meals. Again, when he took a holiday anywhere, he generally combined work with it, in the sense that he almost invariably made his experiences, whether at home or on the continent, the subject of one or more papers, and sometimes of an occasional volume. Utility was the beginning and end of all his occupations, whether of work or pleasure. Even in his reading of books, his early habits of incessant industry were present. He usually read with pencil and note-book in hand, and seldom perused with care any volume which he did not intend to make some special use of, either in the form of a review for the *Journal*, or as a source of information on some subject which he had otherwise in hand. As an exception to this, the Waverley Novels may be noted. These he was fond of reading time and again, and he has been heard to remark, what is worthy of mention, that he looked upon the

writing of these novels as a lost art, in respect that Scott was able, in a degree not since equalled, to combine in the same book at once a romance and a history. He took little interest in books of verse, and exhibited at no time any great taste even for the higher English poets. But any work relating to the history of Scotland, especially to the history of its ancient families, would at all times command his interest, and he made good use of his reading in these departments by contributions to the *Journal* and otherwise.

By the outside world, he was in some respects never quite understood. Many of those who came in contact with him in his business capacity, did not fully appreciate the extraordinary earnestness of purpose which he displayed, the sharp and, as it might seem, peremptory method in which he disposed of matters of detail over which others might have been inclined to waste hours of debate. With a kind of intuitive perception, he saw quickly and clearly the line which he ought, in any given set of circumstances, to follow; and the success which had attended his early efforts gave him a degree of confidence in his own judgment, which to others less clear-headed and decisive might seem slightly overweening. But any appearance of ostentation or haughtiness which might characterise him at such times was merely superficial, and was born of the circumstance that he never could see any advantage in wasting a great many words over matters which admitted of immediate settlement, and that he was strongly alive to the fact that a great deal of what passes both in individuals and public bodies as business activity, is mere idle fuss and palaver. On the other hand, those connected with him in the

operations, whether literary or otherwise, of his own business establishment, found him at all times most willing to listen to suggestions, even upon his own plans, and if these suggestions were feasible and useful, he would without hesitation adopt them. For instance, in his later years each of his literary compositions was submitted to his nephew, Mr Robert Chambers, on whose judgment he had reliance, and to many of whose suggestions he readily deferred. He was, moreover, warmly appreciative of all work that was well done by others, and, with the heartiness of one who knows and understands how much literary or artistic effort is stimulated by the approval of one qualified to judge, was ever ready, in a few kindly words of praise, to express his satisfaction with any well-executed task. At the same time, he expected his ultimate instructions to be attended to with the assiduity which marked all his own operations—an assiduity, indeed, which he never relaxed, until old age and increasing bodily infirmities rendered such relaxation absolutely necessary.

His powers as a writer having developed late, and the field of his purely literary and intellectual attainments having been all along somewhat circumscribed, it is difficult to see how William Chambers could have accomplished, as a pioneer of popular literature, what he actually lived to achieve, but for the fact, as already mentioned, that he found in his brother Robert precisely those mental and literary qualities which his own individual acquirements desiderated. The brothers both possessed, in a high degree, that invaluable accomplishment in any sphere of effort, the power of originating work; and while William, in founding *Chambers's Journal*, truly diag-

nosed, and skilfully provided for, the public wants in the way of readable and instructive literature, it may be safely averred that that *Journal* could scarcely have continued to hold the ground which it immediately gained, but for the fortunate circumstance that Robert had from the beginning enlivened its pages by his regular contributions, and that at the end of three months he entered into partnership with his brother for the joint-conduct of the magazine. No possible combination of individual powers could have been more happy, or, in the end, more successful. The one brother was the complement of the other. For all business requirements, William's industry, frugality, prudence, and foresight were eminently suitable; while for the literary necessities of the project, Robert's versatility and elegance as a writer, his diligence in collecting and working-up stray materials, his perception of what was suited to the popular taste in history and poetry, science and art, rendered him an admirable coadjutor in the conduct of the *Journal* upon which the whole fortune of the brothers was now staked.

It must not be forgotten that when, in 1832, *Chambers's Journal* was originated, the two brothers were neither weak in their pecuniary resources, nor meagre in their literary equipment for the work. William, it is true, had not up to that time written anything of much note, although he had exhibited his literary industry in his *Book of Scotland* and in the *Gazetteer;* but he had for over a dozen years successfully conducted his business of bookseller and printer, and had already, as the result of economy and hard work, gathered not a few golden eggs into his basket. On the other hand, Robert, while he had also carried on

profitably for a similar period the business of bookselling, had at the same time made for himself no mean reputation as an author, and had received considerable sums of money for the copyright of his several works—for the *Traditions of Edinburgh* alone, between three and four hundred pounds. His literary achievements between 1822 and 1832 have not indeed hitherto had full justice done to them. 'Literary composition,' as William says elsewhere in this volume, 'came upon Robert like an inspiration at nineteen years of age.' This was in 1821, in which year the younger brother began the periodical called *The Kaleidoscope*, the most of which he personally wrote, William executing the work of printer and publisher. The little venture was not successful, and scarcely perhaps deserved to be; for, while it contained many clever and spirited contributions which clearly gave promise of future literary power, its contents were on the whole *jejune* and amateurish. In 1822, Robert Chambers issued his first book, *Illustrations of the Author of Waverley;* a somewhat bold attempt on the part of a youth of twenty to solve the enigma of the Great Unknown. The list of his published works during the next twelve years is certainly startling, and brings into prominence the extraordinary literary and intellectual precocity of the author. In succession to the *Illustrations*, published in 1822, he wrote the *Traditions of Edinburgh*, 2 vols., which appeared in 1823–24; *The Fires in Edinburgh*, in 1824; *Walks in Edinburgh*, in 1825; *Popular Rhymes of Scotland*, 1 vol., and the *Picture of Scotland*, 2 vols., in 1826; *History of the Rebellion of* 1745, 2 vols., and the *Rebellions of* 1638–1660, 2 vols., in 1829; *Rebellions of* 1689–1715, 1 vol., and *Ballads*

and Songs, 3 vols., in 1829; the *Life of James I. of England*, 2 vols., in 1830; *Scottish Jests and Anecdotes*, in 1832; *Reekiana*, in 1833; the *Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Scotsmen*, 4 vols., 1832–34; and *Jacobite Memoirs*, in 1834. That is, in all, twenty-five volumes, many of them of great literary merit and permanent historical value, written within the space of twelve years, by a young man between the twentieth and thirty-second year of his age, and during the intervals when not occupied at the back of his counter as bookseller. In authorship so youthful, so courageous, and so prolific, the annals of English literature can hardly parallel the achievement.

The starting of *Chambers's Journal*, involving at once a great outlay and heavy pecuniary responsibilities, was certainly a bold venture on the part of William Chambers—so bold, indeed, that Robert, while he promised his brother all the literary assistance in his power, was disposed to dissuade him from it. Yet the venture was by no means what it was long popularly and vaguely supposed to be, merely a chance effort by two penniless youths, which, by strange good luck, took root and flourished, nobody could tell how. Luck, in the popular acceptation, had something to do with its success, just as luck, in the same sense, had to do with the success of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* and the romance of *Waverley*. But in both cases, success was due to solid causes; and just as these and other works of Scott may be regarded as having grown, by a process of evolution, out of his earlier study of Border ballads and historical antiquities, so *Chambers's Journal* was the natural product of a course of literary effort which amply qualified its projectors to meet the public taste

for popular literature. They were not a couple of young men trying to open the oyster of the world with no more experience of its ways than is to be learned within the walls of a school or college. They had lived in it for thirty years, and learned to cope with its difficulties; their school had been in great part the trying but salutary one of hard experience; they had both travelled on foot over nearly every county in Scotland—William for his *Gazetteer*, and Robert for his *Picture of Scotland*—and in this way must not only have gathered large collections of popular lore, but acquired valuable insight into the popular tastes in the matter of literature. These experiences could scarcely fail to be of advantage to them when they projected and issued *Chambers's Journal*. William's object was clearly stated in his preface to the first number; it was to 'take advantage of the universal appetite for instruction which at present exists,' and 'to supply that appetite with food of the best kind.' The success which from the first attended the magazine, is the best proof that the right kind of literary fare had been provided.

At the end of the fourteenth number it was resolved between the brothers that Robert should cease to conduct a separate business, and that the energies of both should be concentrated on the *Journal*, Robert taking upon himself the chief duties of editor. William has frankly stated that the permanent hold on the public mind which the *Journal* fortunately obtained, was undoubtedly owing, in a very great degree, to the leading articles from the pen of his brother. His own duties lay mainly in the commercial administration of the business. This apportionment of labour, by which the stronger faculties of each were duly exercised, was

eminently qualified to give solidity to their joint undertakings. Personally, Robert had, as he writes to a friend, 'hardly anything to do with business,' and this quite suited his studious habits, enabling him to devote his whole powers to literary labour. In addition to his regular contributions to the *Journal*, he, as mentioned in previous chapters, projected various important works published by the firm, and found time, besides, to write many volumes dealing with social, historical, and scientific topics, a detailed estimate of which does not come within the scope of the present sketch.

From boyhood, Robert Chambers had shown himself possessed of high mental powers, with a quick and retentive memory.* He was in the habit of reading

* The following receipt for school-fees and books for William and Robert Chambers, when they were aged respectively eleven and nine years, and in which the teacher undercharges himself by fourpence, is of interest. In the spelling of his name, their father formed an exception to the rest of his family. When a schoolboy, he had capriciously changed it to Chalmers. His sons, on their part, returned to the correct and original spelling of Chambers.

MR CHALMERS, Merchant, Peebles,

TO JAMES SLOANE.

For Education to his sons Messrs William and Robert, from Martinmas 1810 to Whitsunday 1811, deducting 2 months for each during said time, for absence on account of bad health	£0	13	4
Ditto 1 quarter to Mr William at the evening school in Winter	0	5	0
For a copy of the Rudiments to Mr Robert on 4th October 1810	0	1	3
For Ditto to Mr William on 31st January	0	1	3
For Grammatical Exercises to William on 30th April	0	1	3
	£1	1	9
Mr Robert from Whitsunday to Martinmas 1811	0	10	0
	£1	11	9

PEEBLES, *7th October* 1811.—Received payment.

JAMES SLOANE.

every bit of print that came into his hands; and instead of joining in the more active games of boyhood, would be content to sit for hours in some retired part of the house, reading by himself. At quite an early age, he had read a considerable number of the classics of English literature. As he grew up, his love of books and learning increased with his years, and at an age when most professional men have hardly completed their education, he was already the author of several popular works. Beginning business for himself in a humble way at the age of sixteen years, he carried into it his general habits of industry. The books which he kept contain a note of every day's sales, however small; each book being named, with the price he received for it, and the profit which he had on each particular transaction. In literary matters, likewise, he was a diligent note-taker; and in the course of his many rambles over Scotland, he lost no opportunity, as his note-books show, of jotting down all available memoranda of old traditions, superstitious usages, popular rhymes and proverbs, and folk-lore generally. He was in the habit also of sketching any picturesque old ruin, place of historical interest, or remarkable natural feature of the districts through which he passed; and in this way he gained original and curious materials for many of his better-known books. In his younger years, he wrote a good deal of verse, much of which is of a semi-humorous kind, having reference to some social or domestic incident; the best of these being his 'Annuitant's Answer,' written in reply to George Outram's well-known song, 'The Annuity.' He had likewise a distinct lyrical vein, which he might have cultivated with good result. This is shown

in the beautiful lines 'To the Evening Star,' printed in this volume (pp. 178–79), as also in his spirited and patriotic poem 'To Scotland,' beginning:

> Scotland! the land of all I love,
> The land of all that love me;
> Land whose green sod my youth has trod,
> Whose sod shall lie above me!
> Hail, country of the brave and good,
> Hail, land of song and story;
> Land of the uncorrupted heart,
> Of ancient faith and glory!*

It is not astonishing to find that one so imbued with love of country, looked back with a kind of poetical regret upon the ill-fated Stuarts, and their struggles to regain their lost sovereignty. Without approving of the attempts of the Jacobites, he yet was warmly attracted by their heroism and self-devotion, and followed up with enthusiastic diligence all traces of the last two rebellions in Scotland, the history of which he has so graphically told. To this enthusiasm in the lost cause, he was indebted for one of the warmest friendships of his life, namely, his intimacy with the family of Sir Peter Threipland of Fingask, where he was a frequent visitor, and a great favourite.†

In 1844 a book was issued by a London publishing house which immediately attracted towards itself an enormous degree of attention, and raised a great storm in the world of science and theology. The book was entitled *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*, and appeared anonymously. Within seven months from

* *Poetical Remains of Robert Chambers, LL.D.* (Edin. 1883).

† See *The Threiplands of Fingask: A Family Memoir*, by R. Chambers (Edin. 1880).

its first publication, it had gone through four editions; and its authorship was by a curious public ascribed in turn to almost every great name in science and letters. The secret of its authorship was, however, rigidly kept, and it was not till forty years after the first appearance of the book that the name of the writer was authoritatively revealed. The author of the book was Robert Chambers. This had for long been suspected; but the suspicion was only supported by vague conjectures, which, had the matter been allowed to rest as at first, would never have amounted to anything like reasonable evidence of the authorship. But in a new edition of the *Vestiges* issued in 1884, Mr Alexander Ireland, of Manchester, an old and valued friend of Robert Chambers, contributed a preface, in which he, as the last surviving depositary of the secret, reveals the name of the author, and also gives a narrative of the circumstances under which the book was originally written and published. Mr Ireland likewise explains with fullness and adequacy the various reasons which induced the author to issue the book without his name, all which reasons were eminently consistent with the entire absence of self-seeking, and with the love of knowledge for its own sake, which distinguished Robert Chambers throughout his whole literary career.

In 1841, when, for reasons connected with the education of his family, he removed his residence from Edinburgh to St Andrews, Robert Chambers took advantage of the comparative leisure which he there enjoyed to devote himself to the work which, three years afterwards, appeared as the *Vestiges of Creation*. The book, as already said, quickly became the central element of a burning controversy. At the time of

its appearance, the public were not so familiar as now with the philosophic and scientific discussion of secondary causes as a factor in cosmical phenomena; and the idea of a slow development of higher organisms from lower was regarded as equivalent to thrusting the Creator out of his universe. The author approached the subject under a deep sense of the importance of the issues involved, and with a reverence and humility which were too often overlooked or ignored by the early opponents of the book. He sought to reach his conclusions, not by rash assumptions and vague hypotheses, but by careful and philosophic reasoning. In considering the operations displayed in the phenomena of inorganic geology, he found that all the changes which the crust of the earth had undergone were due to the agency of the ordinary forces of nature, and he was inclined to deduce from this that the organic, like the inorganic world, was developed under the operation of similar laws, and not by two totally distinct modes of the exercise of the Divine Power. The work in which this conclusion is sought to be maintained, must have cost the author immense labour and pains; and it may be remarked that in purity and elegance of style, clearness of philosophic statement, and incisiveness of reasoning, the book is undoubtedly the highest effort of literary composition which Robert Chambers ever achieved.

His general literary habits, as may be inferred from the amount and quality of his work, were of the most assiduous kind. He was so constituted that remarkably little sleep sufficed for him when in health, seldom more than five out of the twenty-four hours being so spent. He read extensively in all

departments of literature, and was in the habit of making copious notes or extracts, either for present purposes, or as materials for future use, scarcely a day passing without some addition being made to his stores of manuscript. His method of work was, upon the whole, regular and systematic. He breakfasted at eight in the morning, and afterwards wrote in his own house till one o'clock, at which hour he visited the office, saw his brother, spent a few hours in the disposal of manuscripts from contributors, or other business that might fall to be transacted by him, and then walked for an hour or two if the weather were favourable. After dinner, when not entertaining company or dining abroad, he was generally in his study again by eight o'clock, when he continued his work till about one o'clock next morning. Notwithstanding his late hour of retiring, he was generally awake early, when he would remain in bed reading for an hour or so, always having some favourite volume by him for this purpose—frequently Horace, whose odes delighted him, and almost the whole of which he had by heart.

But while there was system in this method of work, there was none of the monotonous regularity with which Southey, for instance, performed his literary tasks. Robert Chambers's social instincts were strong, hence his labours were delightfully blended with the pleasures of friendship, and the light and love of his own fireside. He was fond of music; and his wife being gifted with fine musical faculties, which were inherited by her daughters, scarcely an evening passed without its little family concert—wife and eldest daughter at the harp and piano, and the father on the flute. These musical evenings in Robert Chambers's house

formed a feature of Edinburgh society for the time; and it was no uncommon thing to find gathered in his drawing-room the chief representative men of literature and law, science and art, in the northern metropolis, as well as the humbler 'waifs and strays' of artistic and literary life. Visitors from all parts of the world were at all times welcome at No. 1 Doune Terrace, and with these might be seen commingled some of the most notable men of their time—Lord Jeffrey, Lord Cockburn, Christopher North, Lockhart, the Ettrick Shepherd, De Quincey, Dr Moir ('Delta'), Professor Aytoun, George and Andrew Combe, Lord Ivory, Sir Adam Ferguson, Patrick Robertson, besides many noted Edinburgh wits and conversationalists who 'had their day,' and, as is mostly the fate of such ephemera, have 'ceased to be.' He also carried on an immense correspondence with literary and scientific men, and left behind him large collections of letters, many of them of great interest. These collections embrace almost every name of note in the world of literature and science from 1825 to 1871. They contain long manuscript notes on the *Traditions of Edinburgh*, with various letters, in the well-known hand of the Author of Waverley; letters from the Ettrick Shepherd,* Southey, John Galt, Allan Cunningham, De Quincey,

* The following note from the Shepherd is delightfully characteristic:

ALTRIVE, *September* 18, 1835.

DEAR ROBERT—You know or should know that my literary pride is very easily hurt, but that is no reason why we should not be friends as usual. I believe you have not a greater admirer in Scotland than myself, but I will not succumb to you that any man is superior to me as a poet. I introduce to you a young countryman of our own—Mr Dickson—who says he cannot leave Scotland without first seeing your face.—Yours ever,

JAMES HOGG.

Carlyle, Macaulay, Darwin, Sir Charles Lyell, Sir Roderick Murchison, and many others whose names are now set in the roll of fame. These letters evince the catholicity of his opinions, the friendship and esteem with which he was regarded by his contemporaries, and the wide and general scope of his faculties, which enabled him to pursue intelligently even studies that naturally seemed far apart. If his health broke down at an earlier period of life than was the case with his brother, it must be remembered that the younger of the two men was intrusted with that department of work which is the most exacting and exhaustive, and that he engaged in that work with an energy and persistence which few men have equalled.

Such is a brief outline of the habits and character of the two men who founded *Chambers's Journal*, and whose names have long been associated together in almost every country where the English language is spoken. The trials and struggles of their early years, the success which at a later period rewarded their efforts, the munificence with which the elder brother spent a portion of his wealth in purposes of public utility, and the valuable contributions to literature and science which were made by the younger—all these are matters of history, reflecting honour upon the men themselves and upon the country which gave them birth. It is not too much to say that even in the far future the hearts of the lowly will be cheered, and the hopes of the aspiring strengthened, by the story of these two Scottish brothers—WILLIAM and ROBERT CHAMBERS.

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